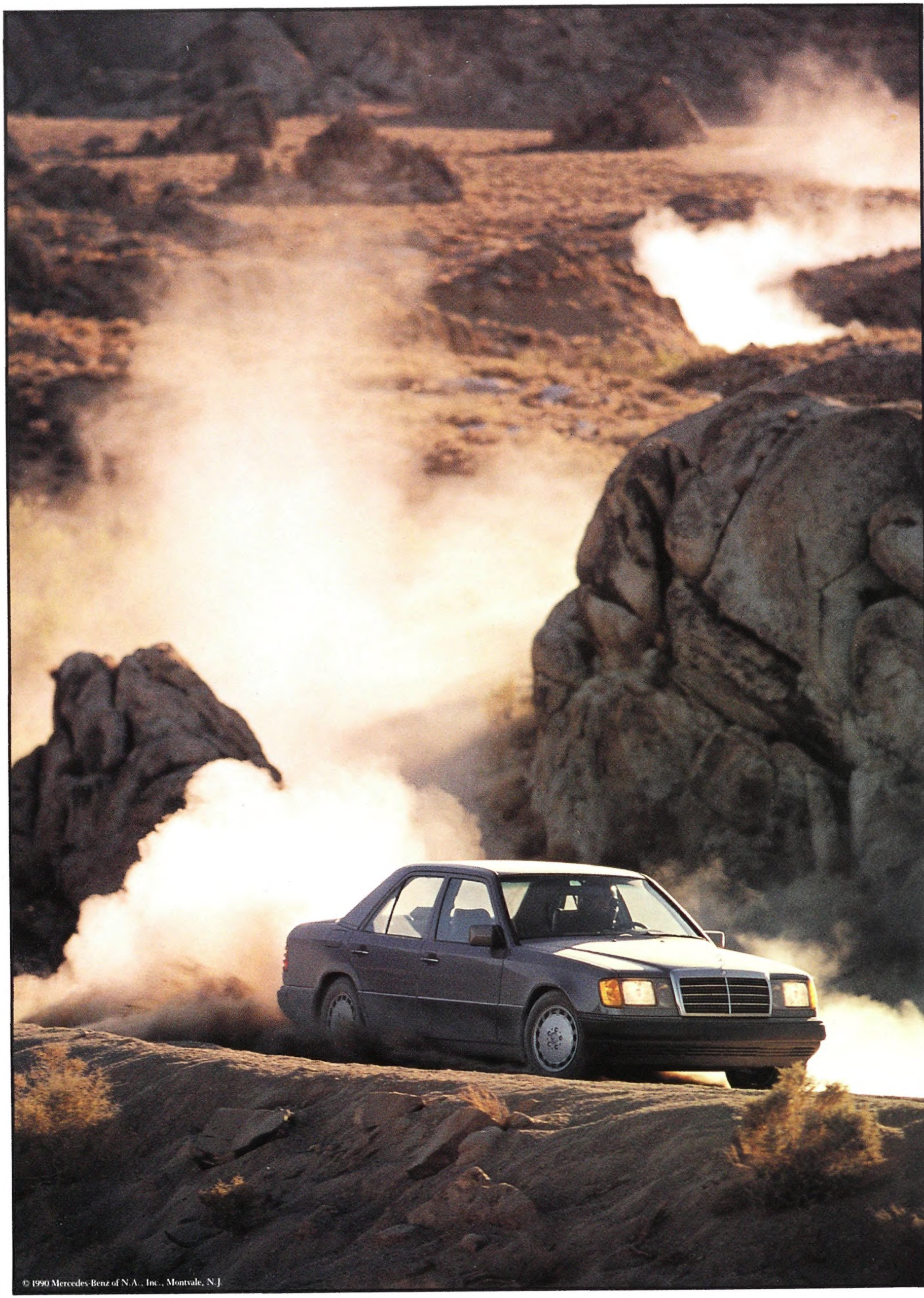
Smithsonian

July 1991

A cormorant hangs its wings out to dry in the sun (p. 44)



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July 1991

Smithsonian

Volume 22, Number 4

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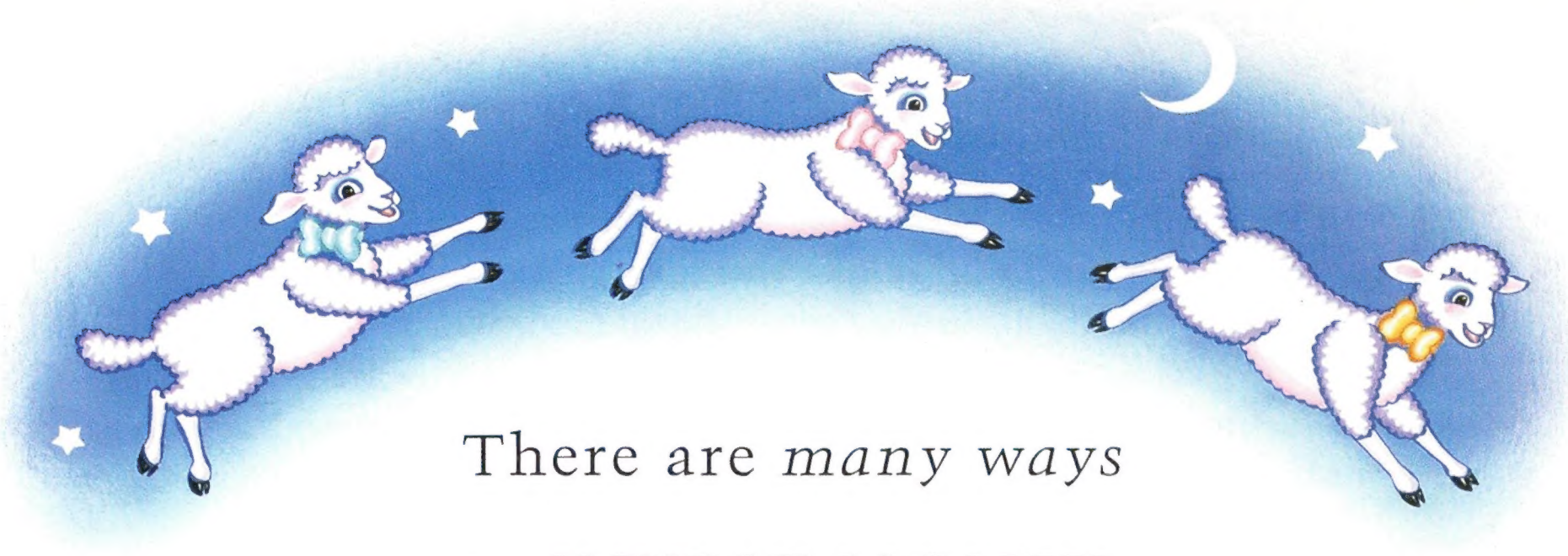

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chemical plant, just when one of your kids make in there and you really sure and it probably should be.

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Smithsonian horizons

Our attention tends to focus on one species at a time, rather than on larger patterns of interdependency

Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep are beautiful animals to watch as they move smoothly and surefootedly in rough country, but they are not necessarily the best neighbors when they make themselves at home in your garden. What prompts these reflections was an encounter early last April with a large and self-assertive ram who took up an observation post just outside the window of my study in Colorado.

More or less at eye-level and just outside the glass, he continued his stoic, unrelenting stare for hours until finally it was I who gave up, shut down the computer and went out to collect firewood. Sheep aren't noted for their intelligence, and most accounts of their behavior refer to it as only a mix of instinctive and habitual. But somewhere along the line the idea dawned on me that this fellow was genuinely puzzled at the arrival of a rare intruder after a winter's absence, and was trying to reach a decision on what to do about me.

Conceding that there is a certain amount of wear and tear on everything we have lovingly planted and cultivated, it is a privilege to have a home on what still passes as something of a frontier. We live at the very edge of settlement, abutting many miles of almost impassable forest and cliff that will be forever public. Elk and especially deer in growing numbers, in addition to a sprinkling of sheep, are regular winter visitors who bed down in our open stands of native piñon and juniper, and develop a taste for the yews and succulent grasses we have introduced. But serene and lovely as the immediate setting appears to be, we cannot afford to neglect a more disturbing, contextual vision of what it represents.

Most of western Colorado is National Forest or BLM (Bureau of Land Management) land. Discontinuous corridors along the valley bottoms are the major exceptions, since they were already settled and in private hands at the time of Theodore Roosevelt's great initiatives to preserve a landed public heritage. But forestry and summer pasturing of cattle (and hence fencing) extend seasonally and selectively upward almost to timberline.

To a casual viewer, and certainly by Eastern (let alone European) standards, human occupancy is sparse and relatively nonintrusive. But now think of the animals. Deer, elk and sheep all need to migrate downslope for winter forage under shallower snow cover. Substituting for their relatively large and dispersed home ranges at other seasons are "yards," in which they congregate in considerable density—and from which irate homeowners sometimes find it almost impossible to dislodge them.

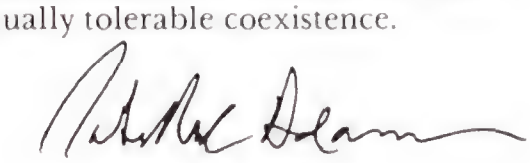
Wolves may have been exterminated as yearlong predators, but their selective effect on the very old, the very young and the weak was in many respects beneficial. By contrast, fences, free-ranging dogs and other forms of human disturbance now are concentrated at the most critical part of the annual cycle of movement, when prolonged cold greatly restricts movement, and access to forage is most problematic. Meanwhile, wetlands in the valley bottoms, now drained or largely beyond reach, are no longer an assured resource in time of drought, and cattle have emerged as formidable competitors for the otherwise richer summer forage in the uplands.

Under these new conditions, hunting has become virtually the only control against overpopulation. But as a control, its selective emphasis on larger, trophy-bearing males downgrades its effectiveness and is crudely insensitive to geographic or annual variability. Driving animals away from their familiar home ranges, it weakens whole populations. And particularly for deer in many regions, hunting has simply failed to cope with exploding numbers.

The natural outcome is a subtle but pervasive disruption of what was once habitual. Except to some extent during the limited hunting season, flight from human proximity has become maladaptive (even then, closer contact with houses and children can provide an alternative form of security). At other times, and especially during the winter, aggressive penetration of the boundaries of human settlement, a new and discriminating taste for ornamentals, and a capacity to recognize most dogs as mere nuisances are keys to optimization of habitat if not survival.

Mountain lions, harder to exterminate than wolves, also seem to have found a way to adapt to the new conditions. Increasing sightings suggest that they are following deer into the rim of settlements, developing a taste for dog and cat as they do so. Black bears, too, are learning to come down out of the backcountry and supplement their diets with garbage.

With regional variations, an account of this kind could be extended to many parts of this country. It suggests the myopia of our own customary perception of our impact as a species. Even when committed to conservation and to being ecologically sensitive, we too frequently focus on the here and now, the single species at the moment of observation rather than larger patterns of interdependency. We really have given animals like that old ram something to puzzle about. I wish I were sure that it lies within their capacity, or ours, to work out a new, joint pattern of adaptation that will assure our modestly stable, mutually tolerable coexistence.



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Letters to the Editor

Mapping the Middle East

Dear Sir: Your May portrait of events and personalities in the Middle East omitted an extraordinary player.

Gertrude Bell was one of the architects of modern Iraq. An English travel writer and Oxford graduate, she became an expert on the Ottoman Empire and was the founding director of the national museum in Baghdad. As a British adviser after the war, she worked on the unification of the Mesopotamian provinces and was crucial in the orchestration of the enthronement of King Faisal I in Iraq.

Frank Prendergast
Burlingame, California

Dear Sir: A few highlights to add to David Fromkin's article. Allenby wanted to enter Jerusalem on horseback through the Jaffa Gate, but received the following message from the War Department: "A greater one than you has entered Jerusalem on foot."

Abdullah, who became emir of Transjordan and later king of Jordan, was assassinated in the El Aksa mosque in Jerusalem by a Palestinian nationalist. Abdullah's grandson is the present king of Jordan.

Faisal II, king of Iraq, was killed by the precursors of Saddam Hussein.

William Basch
Long Beach, California

Pasta

Dear Sir: An unsung hero, Gennaro Spadaccini, made it possible, for the first time in history, for the Bourbon court in Naples to eat spaghetti at a court dinner.

The Bourbon king Ferdinand II loved spaghetti but never dared have it served at court dinners, since it was eaten by raising a handful of pasta above the face, then lowering it into the gaping mouth. Such a spectacle was not acceptable at court dinners.

But Spadaccini, the king's chamberlain, solved the problem. According to Vincenzo Buonassisi's *Pasta*, Gennaro invented a "modern four-pronged fork to spare visiting foreigners the embarrassment of eating spaghetti with their hands. . . . [He] was richly rewarded."

The fork of course, was not a new invention. Even the ancient Romans had used two- or even three-pronged forks. And Renaissance Venetians had used a three-pronged fork for meats.

Gennaro, by adding another prong, made the fork admirably suited to raising a mouthful of slippery strings without using the fingers.

P. (Pasta) Ciaglia
Utica, New York

Dear Sir: As Secretary to France, Mr. Jefferson traveled to Italy in 1787, but only to the northern regions of Piedmont and Liguria. So he directed his secretary, William Short, to purchase a "maccarony machine" while in Naples. Jefferson's passion for Italian food, including pasta, is well documented. Although he did not appear to use his maccarony machine often, he continued to have shipments of Parmesan cheese, anchovies, olive oil and pasta sent to Monticello until his death.

Lawrence Finkel
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Dear Sir: Ms. Hamblin should travel more in Calabria before she dismisses the meatball as an Italian-American invention. A similar myth about pizza has been current for years, doubtless spawned by Italians from the north who were ignorant of *cucina paisano* (country cooking). Our immigrant ancestors from the south brought the pizza to America.

Both Mario Pei and Marcella Hazan credit the southern-Italian origin of the meatball as a way to use tougher cuts and to flavor the sauce. The *polpette* became a daily staple in America, but doubtless it was available only on special occasions in the old country. In my grandmother's house, meat sauce meant sauce simmered with meatballs, a piece of rump (beef or veal) or even soup bones. Any small particles of meat found in the sauce meant that the meatballs had failed to stick together.

Joseph Chiaravalloti
Macomb, Illinois

Dear Sir: The explanation of the origin of *pomodoro* as was given to me, was that tomatoes from the New World were not red in color as they are now, but yellow. The Italian explorers bringing them back called them *pomo d'oro*, or literally "apple of gold."

Sal Cavallaro
Plymouth, Michigan

The first tomatoes in Italy were small and yellow, giving rise to the pomo d'oro *theory. Others claim that Moors from Spain introduced them, hence,* pomo dei Moro *which, some say, was misunderstood by a Frenchman to be* pomo d'amore *(*pomme d'amour*)—love apple.* Ed.

Albigensian Crusade

Dear Sir: It is worth noting that the province of Languedoc, in southwest France, roughly translated, means "language of Oc," a reference to the Occitan tongue in the region.

James Rudolph
New York City

Dear Sir: David Roberts states that the Albigensian Crusade was the only one ever declared by a pope against Europeans. English historian Jonathan Riley-Smith, in his short history of the Crusades, surveys numerous others proclaimed by popes against heretics, as well as political crusades in Europe both prior to and subsequent to the Albigensian. Notable are the last series of five crusades against the Hussites. Pope Martin V proclaimed the first one in 1420, the last in 1431. All were defeated by the Hussite Union.

William E. Culbert
Maple Valley, Washington

Robert Rauschenberg

Dear Sir: What sort of artistic sensibility would "appropriate" a fine regional quilt, given in honor of a child's birth, and make it into a "combine" called *Bed?* That lovely quilt now has all the charm of a dropcloth with a trim of bird droppings.

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serve them, and to show the public that these items of the homely arts are valuable and worthwhile in their own right. Judging by the quilt makers I know who have seen this article, "outrageous" is about the mildest reaction.
Frances H. Murray
Altamonte Springs, Florida

Barber Museum

Dear Sir: The picture of the Barber Museum on pages 112-13 shows how barbers have adapted 20th-century electrical accessories to the barbershops of the Gilded Age. Among the more modern acquisitions are electric shavers, clearly post-World War II in design; and the electric vacuum, vintage 1920 or later. In 1900 the few electrical appliances around would have had bases that screwed into lamp sockets. Some barbers, as in this picture, kept up with changing technologies, perhaps to meet the expectations of their customers.
Michael Brian Schiffer
Tucson

Dear Sir: From 1936 to 1981 I practiced medicine in Watertown, New York, and surrounding areas. Speedy DeCastro was my barber for many years. He not only kept me looking good but kept me well informed on all the local news.
Bennie Mecklin
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Around the Mall and beyond

Dear Sir: You identified the P&O line as the "Pacific and Orient." Actually, it was chartered in 1837 as the Peninsular Service, plying between England and the Iberian Peninsula. The name was changed in 1840 to Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company Ltd. to reflect a new venture: extending the route to India via the Cape of Good Hope. Soon, service was extended to Singapore and Hong Kong.
Paul B. Daly
Colorado Springs
We asked Edwards Park about the P&O, and he replied: "Miss Stearns did it. Miss Stearns is my computer, and she sometimes does things like this because she works very hard and wants to see if anyone pays attention—aside from the grade school teacher in western Pennsylvania who thinks we're always wrong about everything, anyway. I'll talk to Miss Stearns, but I doubt if it will do much good." Ed.

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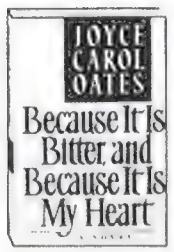

617. The newest novel by this critically acclaimed writer is charged with sexual and racial tension.
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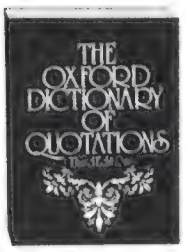

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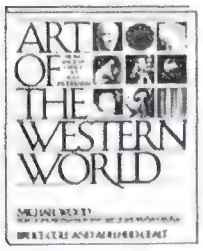

*269. Explore Western art, from the ruins of Greece to the postmodernists. 350 illustrations.
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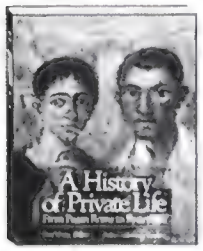
186. Here's a "truly funny anthology of all-original parodic sequels" —*Kirkus Reviews.*
QPB: $13.95



*277. A richly detailed account of private life in the eight centuries between Caesar and Charlemagne.
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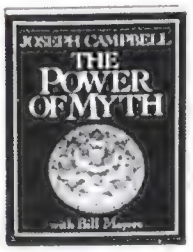

423. A scholar on mythology tells how myths have shaped our lives. A PBS TV series.
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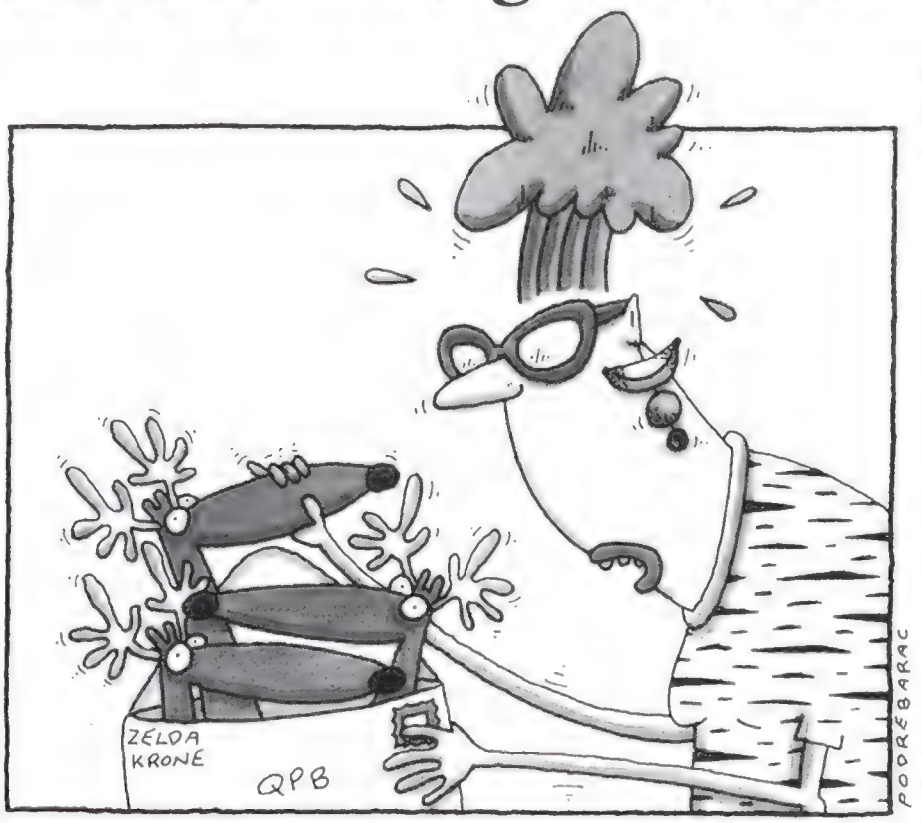

Choosing three books was easy, but getting the three bucks into the envelope proved to be beyond Zelda Krone's capabilities.

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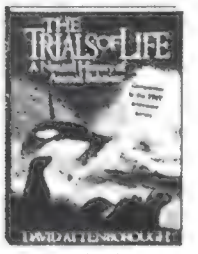

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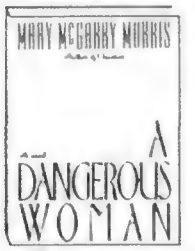

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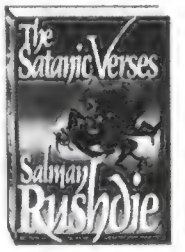

*406. "A roller-coaster ride over a vast landscape of the imagination" —London *Guardian.*
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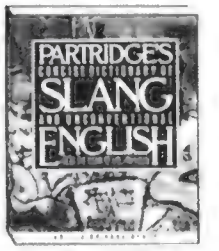

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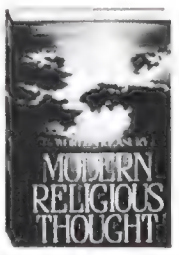

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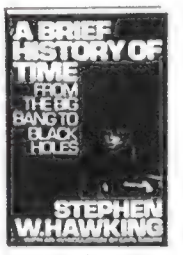

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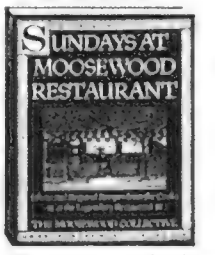

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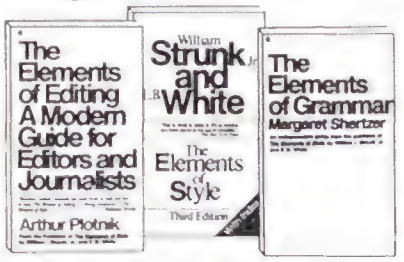
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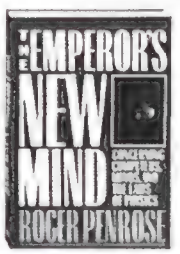

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America needs a ne fast and effective clean

An alarming lack of progress in cleanup.

When Congress enacted the Federal Superfund program in 1980, the goal was to quickly clean up America's most dangerous hazardous waste sites. Congress and many others assumed there would be only a relatively few such sites and that cleanup costs would be limited.

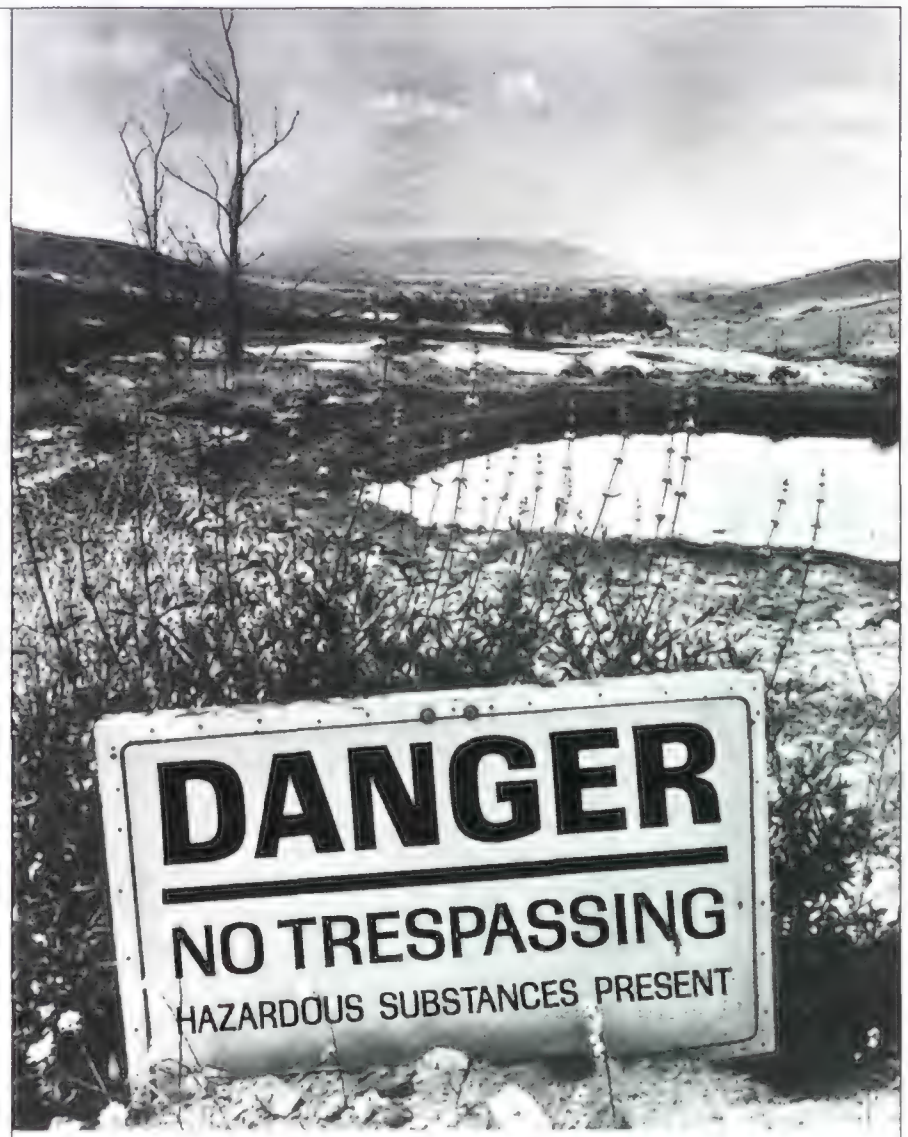
Now, after a decade of trying to make Superfund work, it's clear these assumptions were wrong and that a quick fix was never possible. What's wrong with Superfund and why has so little been accomplished?

The problem is twofold. First, the real scope of our nation's hazardous waste situation is far greater than Congress anticipated. With 1,200 priority sites already identified, growing numbers of sites are being found in every state. The Environmental Protection Agency expects that by the year 2000, there may be as many as 2,000 priority sites.

With rapidly rising cleanup costs, which now average about $25 million per site, the eventual price tag is staggering. According to a top government agency, cleaning up all of America's hazardous waste sites could take from 30 to 60 years and cost up to $500 billion!

A second problem is Superfund's alarming lack of progress in cleanup. A decade and billions of dollars later, fewer than 60 out of the 1,200 sites have actually been cleaned up.

Why? One major reason is Superfund's liability system. It requires that cleanup be paid for by establishing liability–who sent what waste, how much and where–and then negotiating or litigating with those believed to be responsible. While this sounds good in theory, it hasn't worked in practice. Instead, the result has been



delayed cleanup and enormous legal, consulting and other costs unrelated to cleanup.

Compounding the problems instead of solving them.

This is because working out who pays and how much for cleanup is very difficult. Under Superfund, anyone who simply used or owned the site at any time could be liable for the entire cleanup bill. Users can include major corporations, small businesses, local governments, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, even individuals. And it does not matter who caused the harm or whether they did anything wrong. Superfund's retroactive

w system to achieve up of our environment.

liability provision makes parties pay for past actions based on today's standards.

For example, at 422 sites almost 14,000 parties have been notified that they could be liable. In turn, many of them are identifying still others who contributed in some way to the presence of waste at each site. And since Superfund liability deals with past waste disposal, the record of users can go back 25, 30 or even 40 years and can number in the hundreds.

The result? The focus on cleanup has been lost as private and public parties spend years in difficult but unavoidable negotiations and litigation, trying to work out agreements that would provide funds for cleanup. At some sites, more money has been spent resolving complex factual issues than on cleanup itself. This does a lot for lawyers and consultants, but very little for the environment. And of course, these costs are eventually passed on to all of us as consumers in higher prices for goods and services. Isn't it time to stop this wasteful process and get on with cleaning up our environment?

At AIG, we think so. There is little to be gained by arguing over waste disposal that happened long ago. America needs a system that will promote fast and effective cleanup, reduce unnecessary legal fees, spread the cost of cleanup broadly, and encourage responsible waste management practices today.

A PROPOSED SOLUTION: THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND.

To accomplish this, we have proposed creating a National Environmental Trust Fund, similar to the National Highway Trust Fund. Its resources would be used exclusively for cleaning up old hazardous waste sites. Superfund's tough liability provisions would still apply for future pollution, as would all other state and federal environmental laws designed to promote responsible waste management.

One way this fund could be financed would be by adding a separate fee to commercial and industrial insurance premiums in the United States. Even a modest assessment, say 2% of premiums and an equivalent amount for self-insureds, would provide about $40 billion over the next decade – more than enough to clean up the 1,200 highest-priority sites. Without endless time and money spent on legal debates about liability.

A national advisory board consisting of private individuals, industry and public officials could be charged with overseeing the program. We also suggest giving consideration to establishing local technical monitoring committees in each community. These groups of local citizens, representatives of industry and others would work with the Environmental Protection Agency and their own state on the particular cleanup site – from the very beginning of the cleanup effort.

YOU CAN HELP.

We've waited long enough and spent enough money in the courtrooms. Now it's time for action. A cleaner America should be all Americans' shared goal and shared responsibility.

To express your views, or if you would like further information about AIG's proposed National Environmental Trust Fund, write to Mr. M.R. Greenberg, Chairman, American International Group, Inc., 70 Pine Street, New York, NY 10270.

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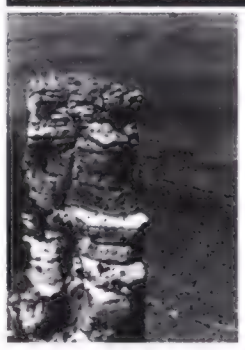

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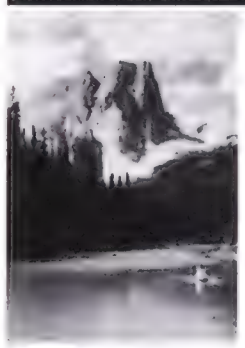

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Around the Mall and beyond

The National Zoo gave a big bash in early March for some of Washington's animal lovers, of which there seem to be thousands. The idea was to introduce them to some of the folks at the Great Ape House—scientists, keepers, gorillas and orangutans.

We guests did a little sipping and munching before joining a reception line that led behind the enclosures. There we paid our respects to Mopie. He's a 503-pound gorilla who likes people to be polite to him, so they are.

Mopie is an impressive sight—a huge silverback, very active on the evening we saw him, though we stayed past his bedtime. Like all gorillas, he's shy and timid and dislikes having humans snooping too much into his affairs. He'd lurk quietly in a corner of his splendid enclosure, watching us out of the corner of an eye. And when a group of us got into conversation, turning toward one another and away from him, he'd dash past, giving the glass a rap with a huge knuckle. To Mopie it was a gentle tap. To us it was a thunderous reminder of the pecking order around here.

For long months the zoo has been carefully putting together a troop of unrelated gorillas to try to duplicate nature's arrangement. And now at last, with the help of other zoos, we have in Washington a healthy, workable community of six gorillas. (On May 10, for the first time in 18 years, a baby gorilla was born here.)

We left the gorillas with profuse apologies and moved on to the orangutans. We have nine of them and met eight, for the youngest, Little Chang, was only 11 days old at the time of our party. We got a close look at them, and they seemed quite fascinated by us. I noticed them nudging one another and pointing at us. I had the feeling that they'd never seen anything so hilarious. Obviously we made their day.

The keepers led us on this backstage tour and enlivened it with anecdotes, for they're close enough to these anthropoid apes to learn all the gossip. One of them, Melanie Bond, let slip that she'd nursed a baby orang through an illness, holding it in her arms all one night. I phoned her later, and she recalled that it was 14 years ago, when Azy was born. Azy is Pensi's son, brother of Tucker, Indah and Iris. Got it?

When Azy was 10 days old, he picked up a fungus infection in his mouth that made it impossible for him to nurse. The keepers made up a sickroom for him in one of the research offices, but when they tried to lay him down in an incubator, he yelled his head off. His instincts rebelled at the prospect of a bed. He wanted to cling to his mother.

Knowing that the baby desperately needed the rest and would never sleep this way, Melanie Bond picked up the sick orang and settled down on a canvas cot, holding the little four-pound infant gently against her. Azy instantly quieted. Since Melanie had been through a long day, she did, too. "Then it was morning, and there I was with little Azy, sleeping peacefully, clutching my clothes."

The gathering of human ape-viewers was bused to the theater in the zoo's education center to see the National Geographic Society's superb film *Urban Gorilla*, about zoo breeding, and meet its producer, Allison Argo. She's an endearingly enthusiastic crusader for establishing gorilla-raising teamwork among zoos. Expensive, yes. But a lot of people chipped in that evening to have a hand in preserving the gentle creatures we'd come to know.

The cause of preservation inspires many exciting projects at the zoo and draws exceptional people to the Smithsonian. One is Alfred L. Rosenberger of the Department of Zoological Research. He's a specialist in morphology; that is, he's concerned with the form and structure of organisms. He's also a notable exception to the old saw that a specialist learns more and more about less and less until he or she knows everything about nothing. Instead, Rosenberger, with the help of some of his colleagues, stumbled onto a side road, followed it and has come up with something remarkable.

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Shown smaller than actual size of 9 3/8" high.

Defender of Freedom

Lenox commemorates the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights

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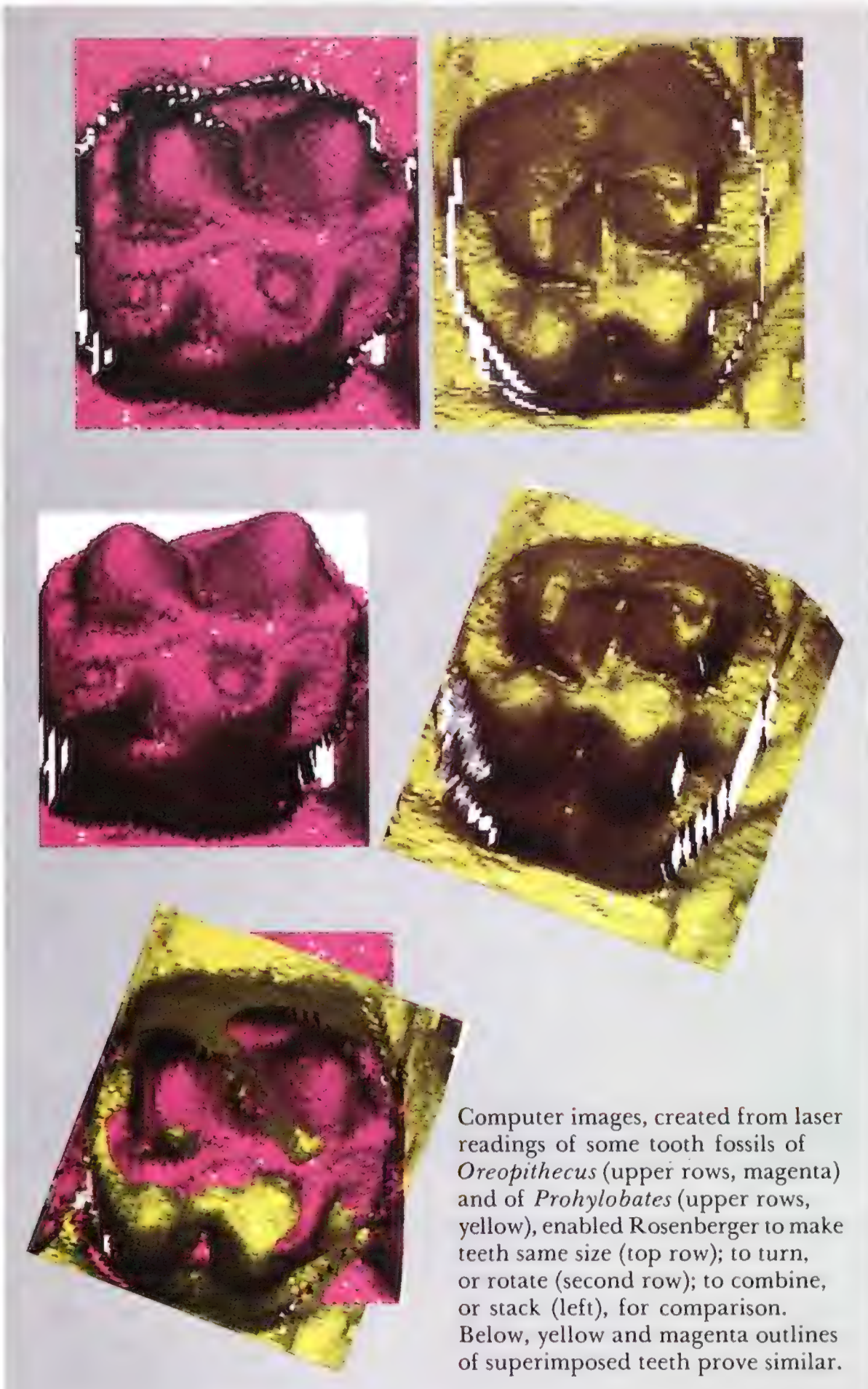
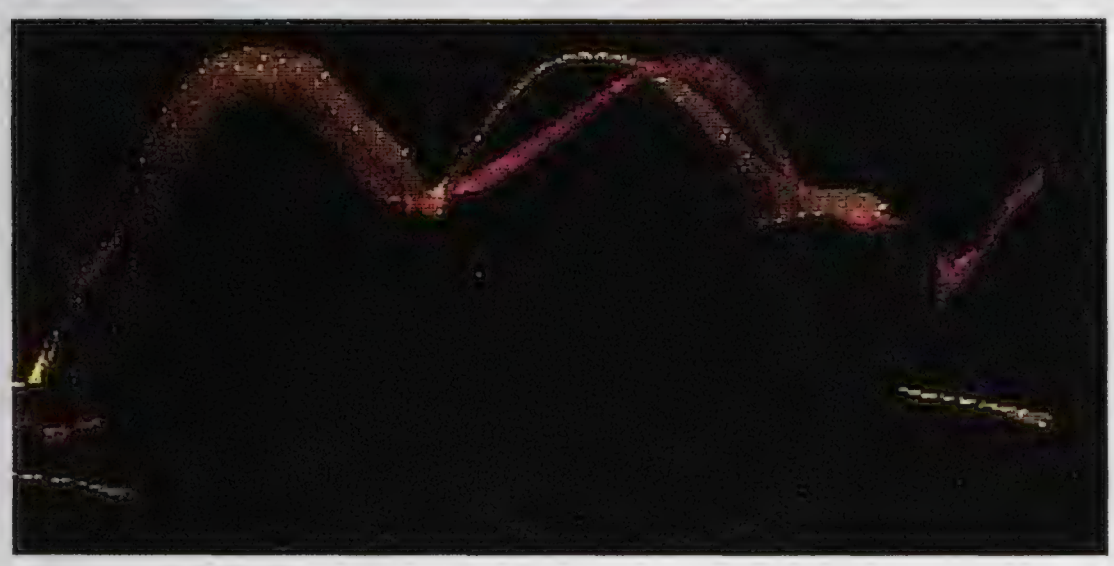


Computer images, created from laser readings of some tooth fossils of *Oreopithecus* (upper rows, magenta) and of *Prohylobates* (upper rows, yellow), enabled Rosenberger to make teeth same size (top row); to turn, or rotate (second row); to combine, or stack (left), for comparison. Below, yellow and magenta outlines of superimposed teeth prove similar.



Rosenberger says he's 40-ish, but bartenders must "card" him every time. He came to the zoo to work with our golden lion tamarins, helping prepare them for reintroduction into the forests of Brazil (see this column for September 1988). But he took a valuable electronic shortcut. Before he knew it, he'd detoured into the realm of computer graphics and their use in visual modeling.

"People are visual animals. They need to *see* things to understand them," he told me. I agreed. When it comes to grasping a scientific concept, I come from Missouri: I have to be shown. Rosenberger was just the man to appreciate that. He produced what looked like a dentist's mold. Since I am my dentist's favorite object of experimentation, I was able to recognize upper right molars, bicuspids and canines.

"These come from *Oreopithecus*," said Rosenberger. "The first fossils were turned up in Italy in 1872. One good skeleton of this animal was found in 1958. We know it lived about seven million years ago. But we don't know whether it was ape or monkey, prehuman ancestor or something in between. It's what we call 'enigmatic.' "

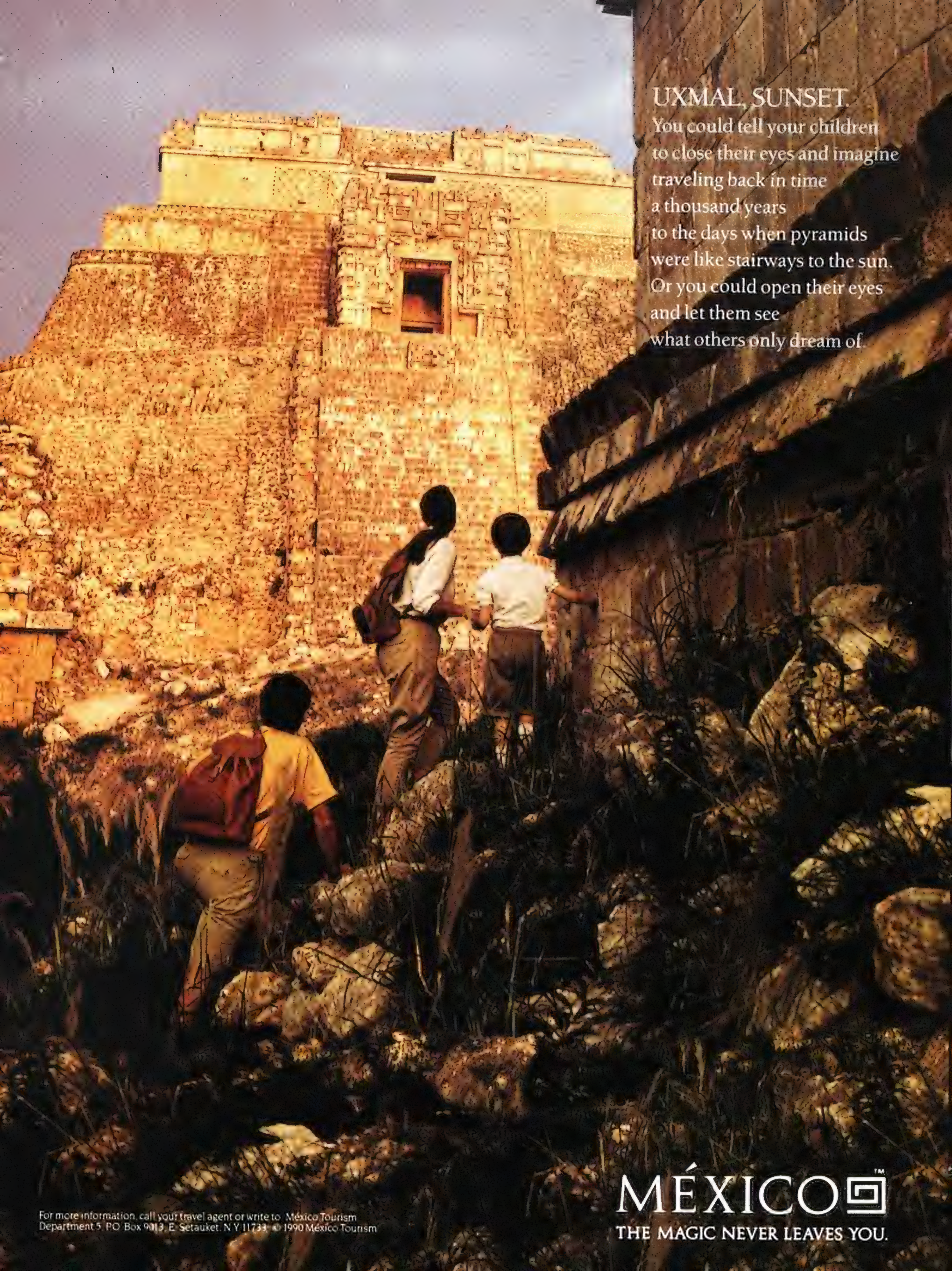
Rosenberger then came up with a small, single tooth of the same jaw area. "This comes from another small primate called *Prohylobates*. We know it's ten million years older than *Oreopithecus*, and we know it's a monkey. Checking for any similarities or differences between these sets of teeth should tell us if *Oreopithecus* is more like a monkey or an ape, right?"

I nodded expectantly, slipping into the role of the kid on *Mr. Wizard*.

"Typically, we would make a lot of measurements of the teeth and carefully note so-and-so millimeters across the cusps and down the lingual side, and then compare the numbers. But with a computer we can reproduce these shapes on the screen and compare them visually. Then our understanding goes deeper. Here."

Out came a photograph, and sure enough, deeper went my understanding. Here were the two teeth as traced by laser. To get the data into the computer, the laser ranges back and forth across an object, touching up to 30,000 points, making a tiny topographic map of it. The computer then pictures, in three dimensions, what the laser sees.

Oreo's molar was printed in magenta, Prohylo's in yellow (left). Since Pro-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hylo's is smaller, Rosenberger had the computer expand it to match Oreo's.

"Now we see distinct similarities," he said. "But to find how close they are, we make the computer superimpose them, or stack them, as though one was fitting inside the other."

He shoved another print before me. Now magenta and yellow were intermixed, areas of yellow blocking out the magenta as Prohylo's cusps rose a little higher than Oreo's.

"To make them fit better," said my mentor, "we had to get the computer to rotate one image against the other. Using two points on each tooth as checkpoints, we then see how the two teeth align all across their surfaces."

The next print looked like my grandson's first untitled masterpiece. It was a cross section of the two tooth surfaces; the lines of yellow and magenta ran together in some places, while they ran almost parallel in others.

"That means the fit's very close," explained Rosenberger. "The cross section shows us that the differences between the two teeth are almost negligible. We've never before had a tool that can show the complete three-dimensional contour of a specimen like this. You can play with these images endlessly."

One example of what he calls "playing" is to superimpose upper and lower tooth images so that they come together, or articulate, as in a bite. This could help us understand how teeth wear, and that, in turn, would give us clues to the ages and diets of the animals we're studying. "I'd like to use the computer to animate a tamarin chewing, to learn about the function," said Rosenberger.

And what about Oreo and Prohylo? What have we learned? Rosenberger shrugs. "Well, I think *Oreopithecus* was probably a monkey. But what's more important is the tool. Superimposition allows us to make objective comparisons—comparisons that our eyes and brains simply cannot manage."

So, Rosenberger the tamarin man has worked out a tool that may uncover some evolutionary secrets. Fascinating. Not just because it's effective, but because it's as far-ranging a digression as those that I and other liberal arts generalists habitually embrace. Gladly we welcome this scientist into our association. Though I doubt that he'll ever reach my own exalted plateau: knowing nothing about everything.

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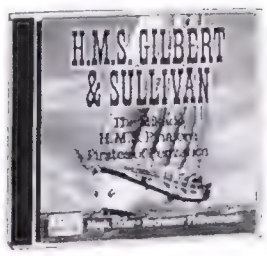

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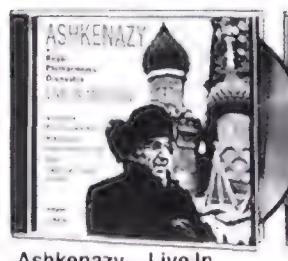

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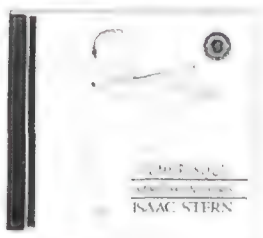

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Phenomena, comment and notes

Sadly, there can be too much of a good thing. When every bird is new, even a fanatic will put down the field guide

It is always nice to get out of town and see some new faces, and especially when those faces are bright yellow with red accents, bright red with cream and black accents, or black velvet with blue eyebrows. For those with the mild mental disorder that causes us to seek out birds wherever we happen to be, adding to our life list is more than pleasant: seeing new feathered faces can become a passion. On the home grounds, one new bird is a big day. But the farther from home we wander, the higher the probability of seeing new birds. Travel too far, however, and there is a danger of overdose.

Last May it happened to me in Paraguay, a country far enough away that almost every bird I saw was new. I birded and birded, and finally burned out. On the afternoon of the last day I was driving down a country road, ignoring wholesale additions to my life list. These were not little tweety birds in the bushes, the LBJs (little brown jobs) that are hard to pin down. These were hawks and eagles, kites and falcons, staring fiercely from fences and tree limbs as I drove past. A yellow-headed vulture leaps out of the grass alongside the road, goes into a tight climbing turn—keep driving. Ibises and herons I've never seen before fly across the road and the best I can manage is a "Mmmmm."

The warm-up was a six-hour bus ride to the east, across the Paraná River into Brazil. There is a hotel there, inside a national park, that looks down onto seemingly endless, curving walls of water cascading over basalt cliffs, the cataracts of Iguaçú Falls. Those you see from the hotel are only the aperitif: down the hill is a path that takes you through the forest to the head of the gorge. Everything is wet and mossy, a place of continuous mist, the spray from cascades all around you. Ring-tailed coatis, looking like stretched-out raccoons, patrol the path, ignoring streams of tourists. Slaty-breasted wood rails, as large as chickens, emerge from the woods on one side, cross the path and disappear on the other. In the branches above are small toucans with red-sashed yellow chests, the strength of their calls equal to their magnificent beaks; blond-crested woodpeckers; and multicolored trogons, cousins to the totemic quetzals.

The best comes last. At the head of the falls the bulk of the Iguaçú River plunges straight down into the Devil's Throat. You are mesmerized by water seeming to fall in slow motion, disappearing into eternal clouds of spray at the bottom. Only after a long time do you notice that there are birds flying in front of these walls of water, a drab brown, seemingly inconsequential species, the great dusky swift. They are circling, swooping, hunting the insects unlucky enough to have been carried to this place. Then you slowly realize, almost against your better judgment, that it is their Spanish name that makes sense: *vencejo de cascada*, "swift of the cascade." Every so often a swift will fly right up to the face of the cascade, appear to hesitate, and then fly through the falling tons of water to the cliff inside. A moment later, in another spot, a swift will suddenly materialize outside the wall of water, shake itself and fly off to hunt. The cliffs inside the falling water are where they perch, where they nest, protected by one of the natural wonders of the world.

On the other side of the Iguaçú is an Argentine national park, from which you can walk out over the water above the falls for at least a half-mile, coming at last to a point from which you can stare directly down into the Devil's Throat. Mesmerized again, and thoroughly soaked, you start the walk back, past swooping white-winged swallows, over elegantly plumed southern lapwings. A tall blackish wading bird, a limpkin, flies unhurriedly away from you. Raucous calls come from the top of a tree on a small island, and there is a vision from birder's heaven: two toco toucans, enormous yellow bills bright in the morning sun. As so often happens on a birding trip, one of the best of the birds was back in the parking lot: plush-crested jays, the birds with black-velvet faces and blue eyebrows, dark bodies and bright-yellow bellies. These are birds that hit you over the head with field marks.

The main event was a trip to the northwest, into the Chaco, an enormous, flat, ancient seabed known to ranchers there as the green hell. My mental image of the Chaco has always been one of scrublands, and indeed it may be so still farther west, where wells are carefully marked on the map. But the 275 miles I managed to see are anything but. The road is raised and the low places from which the dirt has been moved are filled with water and wading birds. Coconut groves alternate with rangeland, cactus with lines of hardwood trees.

Driving is itself an adventure. The trans-Chaco highway is the only paved road in the western half of the country: a narrow two lanes, narrow shoulders grown up in tall grass and thornbushes. Traffic is very light: an occasional bus, a pickup truck, a double-trailer cattle truck. The problem is guessing which of the cattle grazing at the very edge of the pavement will decide to cross the road, or when a vaquero will appear, leading 20 horses across the road to a field on the other side. Every 50 miles or so you stop at a military checkpoint, where armed soldiers write down your name and license number.

When you are not braking for a cow, you are standing on the brake because you have spotted something. The first few times you see a mixed flock of wood and maguari storks, the reflexes born of years of looking for lesser birds bring you to an automatic stop. In some flocks a sprinkling of roseate spoonbills adds color. You stop again for a plumbeous ibis, and a flight of noisy buff-necked ibises flies over you like a flock of city pigeons. At one pond a pair of wattled jacanas, marsh birds with enormous feet, guard their chicks; at another, 20 of them are flashing the bright-yellow undersides of their wings.

We stop to watch two of the aptly named great black hawks fight for a perch on a telephone pole. A black-collared hawk, with white head and beautiful rufous body, allows us to approach to within 20 feet before it aban-

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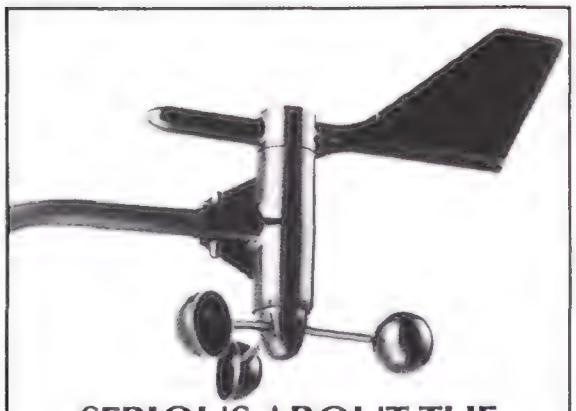

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dons its fence post. Again and again we inconvenience loudly protesting crested caracaras as we stop to examine anteaters killed by passing vehicles.

Everywhere in the bushes are small white birds—the monjita, or little nun. Flocks of monk parakeets raise a ruckus. Guira cuckoos fly up as we pass. Every other telephone pole, it seems, supports a domed nest built of mud and grass that looks remarkably like the domed brick ovens on raised wooden platforms outside the country homes. Only later did I find that this is the work of the Argentine national bird, the rufous hornero. There must have been hundreds of these little brown-and-gray birds, but who had time for LBJs?

At the Salado River we found a bird that was technically a new species for me but seemed like a letter from home. The white-necked heron looks, to the untrained eye, exactly like the great blue of more familiar places, my omen of good luck. Great egrets, beauties of another familiar species, were everywhere, but somehow the heron was special.

The bird highest on my wish list was the rhea, South America's version of the ostrich. We saw none in the fields, to the surprise of birders back in Asunción, but did spend an hour in the company of four tame ones, walking around on the estancia of a Texan from Houston. The male rhea walked right with us, his curiosity about the newcomers tempered only by his distrust of a German shepherd on a leash.

It was after dark when we rolled into Loma Plata, a town in the center of Mennonite colonies, a German-speaking world unto itself. We had driven north from the paved road to find ourselves on a divided, four-lane, oiled-sand highway, complete with traffic circles. The center of this pioneer town is lined with shops, including a Volvo dealership and a factory where small houses are built, loaded onto trailers and delivered to a site. The hotel is next to a milk-processing plant, not far from the wood-fired generating station.

I wasted much of the next morning looking for a birding hot spot. Only at noon, almost the worst time for birding, did we find the right place, a Mennonite campground set in the midst of ponds and lakes. We did see half a dozen limpkins and a cream-backed woodpecker (the first glimpse of a red crest and an unequivocally ivory bill almost put me into a Presidential fibrillation). And on the way out we spotted another plumbeous ibis and a pair of whistling herons that went into impressively acrobatic dives and turns as they flew from us.

The most memorable for me were a couple of red-legged seriemas we saw going into the park. These are tall, long-legged birds that prefer running to flying. They look very much like light-colored turkeys that have been compressed laterally, squeezed until they are only about three inches wide. The birds themselves are striking, and they are also in a family unknown in North America. I had only been scratching the surface, picking off the spectacularly colored, easily identifiable species. There were whole families I had missed: woodcreepers and antbirds, sungrebes and guans, screamers and motmots. The whole trip had been only a taste.

We were running late, it would be dark at 5:30, it was time to let go. And so we drove south through the Mennonite ranches, heading for the paved road and the capital, six hours away. I was passing half a dozen new life birds per mile, all those birds of prey watching us from their hunting perches. Some were so striking, so unafraid that I backed up for a second look. I could only stare, too glazed to pick up the field guide. Time had been called.

John P. Wiley jr.

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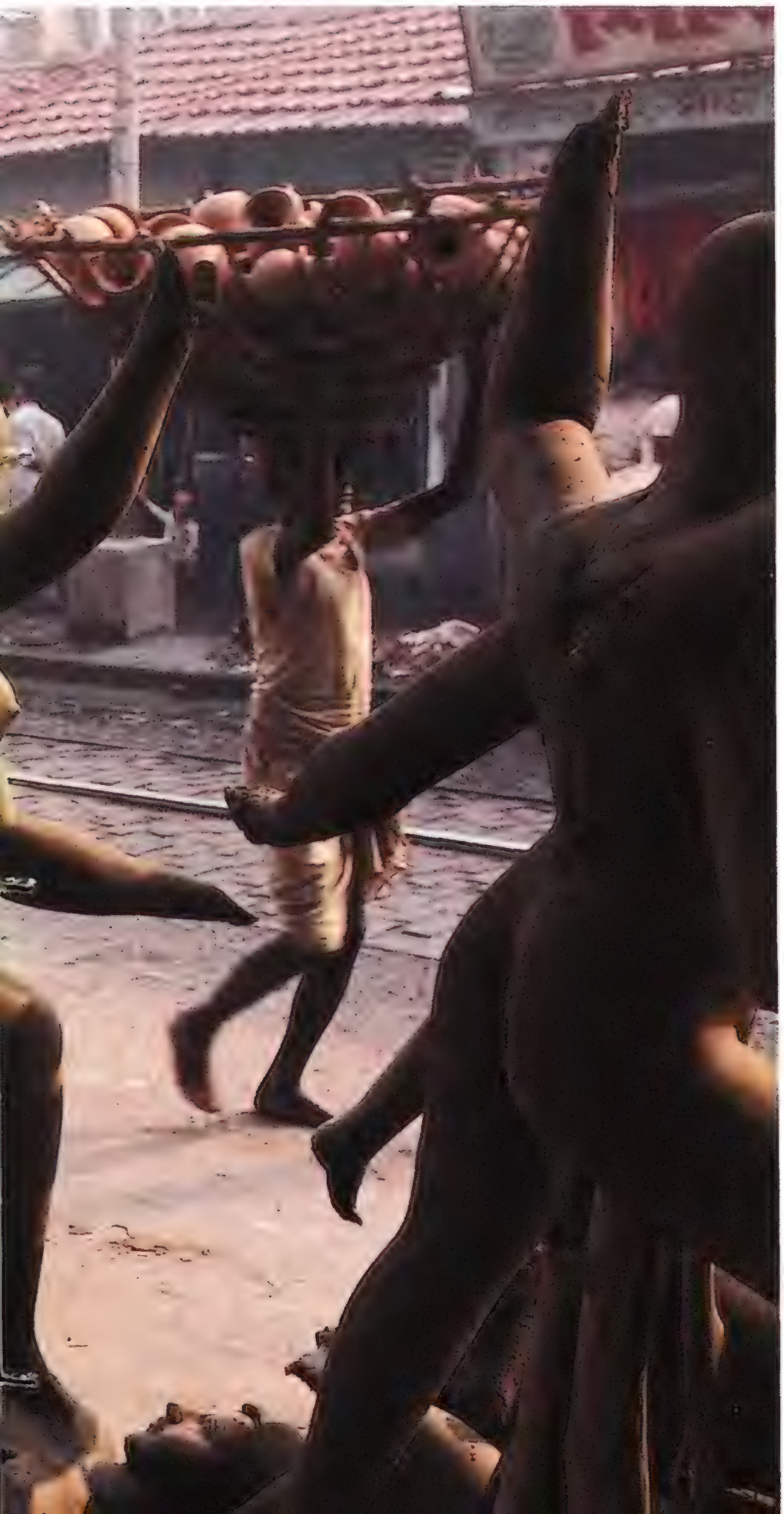
By Julian Crandall Hollick

Amid Calcutta's poverty, there's no dearth of cultural wealth

Founded 300 years ago by a British trading company, the city passionately blends Western arts and letters with Bengal's ancient heritage



Rabindranagar is a bustee, or slum, in Calcutta, unloved and unrecognized, home to 600 men, women and children. It consists of 80 one-room thatched huts, squeezed between a stagnant pond and the main road that leads from the downtown heart of Calcutta past Salt Lake, a suburb of gray apartment blocks built just 25 years ago but prematurely aged and yellowing, victims of the constant humidity.

It was dusk, a soft smoky haze punctuated by the wan smiles of underpowered street lamps. In this entire slum, there was just one light bulb, jury-rigged illegally from the nearest telephone pole. My friend Raja Chatterjee and I held flashlights while 10-year-old Samra Bhaja, sitting cross-legged on a rug thrown over the bare earth, accompanied herself on the harmonium.

Samra had never attended school. She probably never would. Most days she helped her mother roll bidis, cheap Indian cigarettes—cut tobacco rolled in leaves and held together with thread. Samra's voice was pure, untrained, with perfect pitch, full of pale melancholy as she unfolded her song: "This necklace bruises me; it strangles me when I try to take it off. It chokes my singing. Take it from me! I'm ashamed to wear it. Give me a simple garland in its place."

"Who wrote this song?" I asked. Samra was too shy to answer. Raja was astonished: "Tagore! Rabindranath Tagore! Surely you've heard of him?" I hadn't then. But over the past few years, Raja has almost single-handedly educated me, not only about Tagore but also about all of Calcutta's myriad cultures.

Calcutta. The name conjures up an image of poverty and human suffering: the Black Hole, starvation, barefoot beggars. It is a city of somewhere around 11 million people, about 5 million of whom live in slums, perhaps another quarter-million living on the streets. Yet, ironically, something else is going on in Calcutta, something that doesn't recognize the boundaries of caste or class, education or illiteracy. For if there is any one thing that binds Brahman and Untouchable, babu and domestic worker, slum dweller and rich socialite, it is a passion for culture. Indeed, Calcutta as a city proudly defines itself through this passion.

At the height of its glory in the 19th century, Calcutta was called the second city of the British Empire, rivaling London in its riches and social refinement. No surprise, then, that in Asia, Calcutta was regarded as the center of learning for everyone from Peshawar to Hong Kong. What does surprise many people outside India is that, in its own collective mind, Calcutta undoubtedly still holds this position.

In potters' quarter of Calcutta, clay images of the ferocious goddess Kali await festival celebrating her.

Photographs by Raghubir Singh

Calcutta: cultural wealth amid poverty

Satyajit Ray, famous worldwide as a filmmaker, also edits a children's magazine started by his grandfather.

It's commonly claimed (although I don't know how these things can be measured) that Calcutta has more poets than Paris and Rome combined; more literary magazines than either New York or London; more theater companies and art galleries than anywhere else in Asia; and undoubtedly more publishers, however small. It's the only city in India where movie theaters have "House Full" signs outside their doors from lunchtime onward. Poetry readings are major events, sometimes drawing more than a thousand people.

Why this hunger for culture? One prominent poet thinks many of the audience at poetry readings are there just to be seen. Filmmaker Satyajit Ray, who admits he can't really explain why so many Calcuttans pack theaters, cinemas and concert halls, suggests that cultural events are a great way for young people to meet and have a chance "to be alone together for some time, maybe holding hands while the lights are down." Bob Wright, who runs the Tollygunge Club, one of Calcutta's leading social and athletic gathering places, offers a more convincing explanation. "The Bengali," he says, "has always set himself up to think that God put him on this Earth to be a poet or a writer, and other races to do the dirty work."

The city is a mere 300 years old

"Always" is a word that goes back a long way in India. In the Calcutta area, there have been village settlements of fishermen, weavers and priests for at least a thousand years, while Calcutta itself is a mere 300 years old—young by Indian standards. Established by the British East India Company in 1690 to serve as a trading post, the city is attached like a human ear to the banks of the Hooghly River. The inner ear is the "White Town," the former European city of spacious homes and broad avenues, built around a vast green core of field and wood—the Maidan—Calcutta's answer to Central Park. Beyond that, encompassing the three villages that predate the British settlement, lies the native section, or "Black Town," of narrow lanes, innumerable slums, bazaars, temples, mansions and godowns (warehouses). The oldest part of the Black Town is the top of the ear: North Calcutta. This is where Rabindranath Tagore's family lived.

Into this city flowed the influence of Western art forms—the novel, the short story, painting, popular and classical music, theater and, later, cinema—primarily from Great Britain, but also from other Western countries. Calcuttans took these alien cultural forms and ran with them. In so doing they reinvented and reinvigorated Sanskritic and Bengali culture. One of the pioneers was the early 19th-century social reformer Raja Rammohun Roy, usually called the father of the "Bengal Renaissance." Roy believed fervently that Bengal's future

lay in producing a synthesis of the best of East and West.

The Tagore family was in the vanguard of this movement. The family included brilliant artists and writers, but all their talents were recombined in Rabindranath. In 1913 he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. The effect in Calcutta was electrifying, confirming for Calcuttans their self-appointed role as the intellectuals of India. It's hard to escape Tagore's influence in Calcutta, especially that of his songs. He wrote more than 2,000, many in the minor key, most of them about God, nature and love. You hear them on the radio, in homes, on the train, in schools and in slums like Rabindranagar.

A monthlong festival for Tagore

Every year, Calcuttans celebrate Tagore's birthday with a monthlong festival of his poetry, plays, music and dance dramas, which usually deal with Indian mythology. They also show films made by Satyajit Ray of Tagore's short stories and novels.

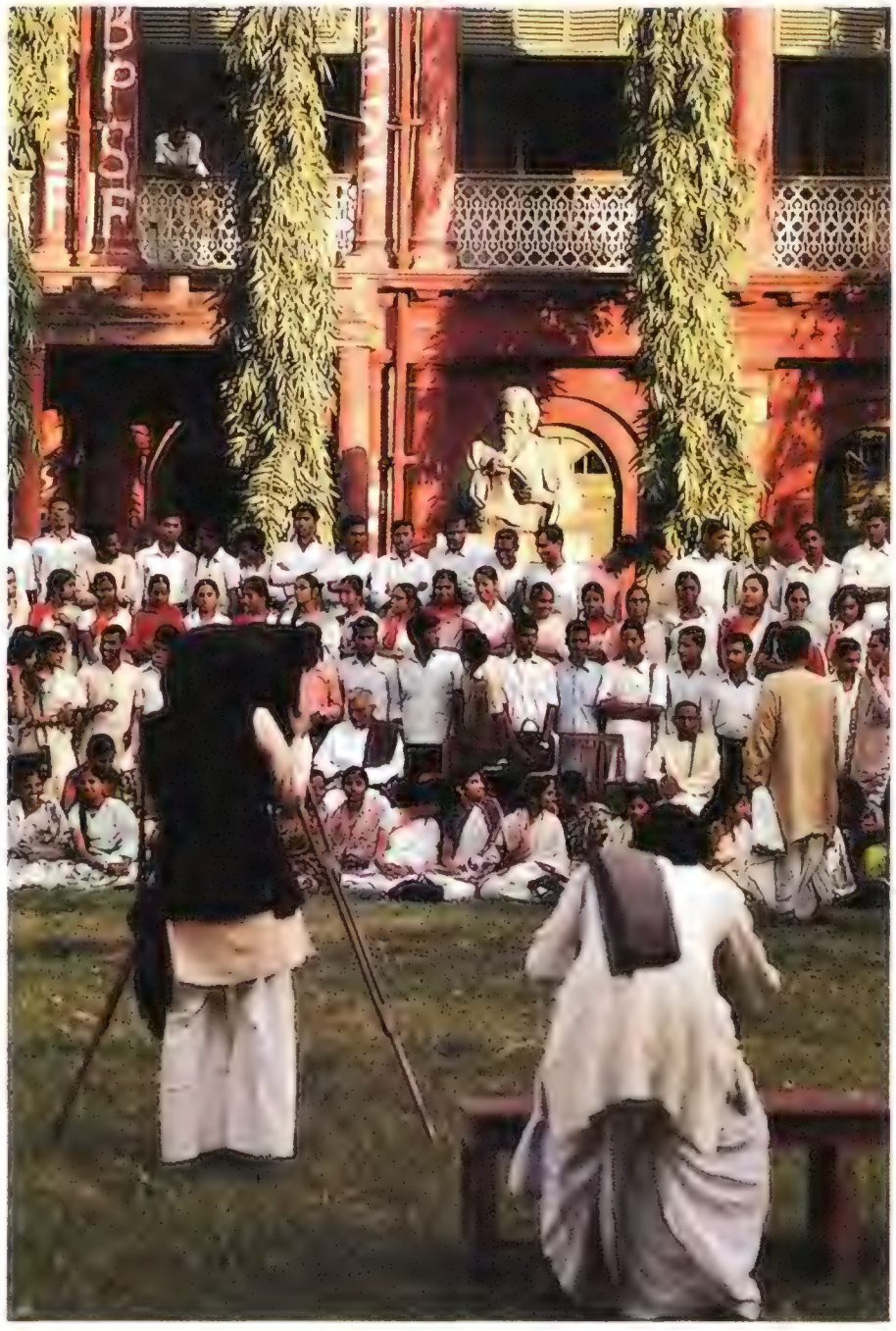
Satyajit Ray grew up in a Calcutta family that was close to the Tagores. He studied at the university established by Tagore, although he found the great man intimidating. "You could never really get very close to him because he was a remote kind of figure," says the 69-year-old filmmaker today. "His looks and everything, his beard and his enormous height, even his speech was very florid. He never used a wrong word. Everything was so incredibly perfect. That's off-putting."

Ironically, Ray grew up to be as tall and imposing a figure as Tagore himself. On the set at the ramshackle film studios in Tollygunge, an area of South Calcutta jokingly dubbed "Tollywood," every take is preceded by the stentorian imperative "Silence!" boomed out by Ray himself. Filmhands stop playing cards in the gloom at the far end of the studio; fans are switched off as Ray's son takes the camera in close for a reaction shot of Soumitra Chatterjee, one of Ray's favorite actors, sitting in an armchair listening to Beethoven.

Calcuttans are proud of Ray's fame in the West, although some have resented his refusal to espouse the fashionable Marxism of many of the city's intellectuals. But Ray, like Tagore the product of a creative family, follows his own instincts. His grandfather started a children's magazine, *Sandesh*, to which Ray's father contributed wonderful nonsense verse before his early death. In 1961 Satyajit Ray revived *Sandesh*. He still edits and writes for it; he also writes novellas featuring a Bengali version of Sherlock Holmes called Feluda.

Many think of Ray as the successor of Tagore, who died in 1941. Multitalented like Tagore, he writes, directs, composes. He is also sensitive to the dilemmas of ordinary men and women torn between the contradictory pressures of change and tradition, and he uses a

City elder R. P. Gupta chats with young poet at a bar where ricksha-wallahs and intellectuals rub shoulders.



Statue of Rabindranath Tagore, who won Nobel Prize in 1913, presides over class picture at local university.

Culture is the common coin in Calcutta. At left, Runu Chatterjee plays piano for husband, Raja, and daughter, Sonali. Nirmalya Acharya (center) edits one of the city's prominent literary magazines, *Ekshan*.

Western art form to convey essentially Bengali themes.

One former Calcutta writer, Nirad Chaudhuri, carried his love of Western culture to an extreme. Now living in Oxford and writing vigorously at age 93, Chaudhuri has been called "the last true Englishman" because of his unshakable devotion to the English culture he and his generation grew up with in Calcutta.

Chaudhuri's wedding 60 years ago presented a crisis for him. His marriage was arranged by his parents, and the first time he and his wife saw each other was on their wedding day. Chaudhuri had just discovered Western classical music through 78-rpm records. "So when I met my wife for the first time after the wedding I was extremely uneasy about that point; not so much about meeting a wholly strange girl as wife, as about that. So when we lay down on the bed side by side, first thing she did was to raise my hand and tell me: 'You are very thin. I shall take good care of you.' " In return, Chaudhuri asked her: "Have you heard any European music?" She nodded. "Have you heard the name of a man called Beethoven?" Again, she nodded. "Can you spell it?" She spelled it correctly. "I felt very reassured," he says today. Chaudhuri remains thin, but he and his wife are still married.

Chaudhuri's rage to live the life of the intellect is seen today throughout Calcutta, which is, above all, a city of scribblers. It seems that all Calcuttans feel that they have a right to see their opinions and prejudices in print. "There are two things you will find in the middle-class Bengali character," claims Nirmalya Acharya above the din of ceiling fans and animated conversation in his favorite haunt, the coffeehouse on Bankim Chatterjee Street just off College Street. "They try to write poetry—every Bengali considers himself a poet—and they try to bring out one little magazine."

Nirmalya should know. Along with some other university friends he started a literary magazine in 1961 here in the coffeehouse. "We used to have interminable conversations—we call them *addas*. We'd spend the whole day chatting, exchanging ideas with like-minded people. We would talk about everything and anything, from cricket to politics, from films to hippies. We used to sit at one particular table here. I wanted to become a poet. At that time the leading literary magazine was *Parichay*. (It's still published today.) But they had their pet authors and they wouldn't publish any of our stuff. So, Soumitra [Chatterjee, the actor] and I said, Why don't we start our own magazine?" With Satyajit Ray's help, they came up with the name *Ekshan*, which means "Now" or "Present Day." "We never thought the magazine would last more than a few issues," says Nirmalya. "It's 30 years now. I think the time was right!"

For the first ten years *Ekshan* was published six times a year, gradually finding its own voice. It published Satyajit Ray's film scripts, and Ray himself contributed articles and designed the covers. In the '70s, the magazine examined some literary sacred cows, producing special issues on Marxism and Dante. "We've also published the memoirs of many Bengali women," Nirmalya tells me as we walk from the coffeehouse to the tiny room that serves as the business office and storeroom of the magazine. "I think that the best-known are

The author is the regular India correspondent for National Public Radio and is the producer of the forthcoming radio series Passages to India.

The Little Magazine Library (right) is maintained by schoolteacher Sandip Dutt (in plaid shirt). The most complete collection of Bengali periodicals anywhere, its 12,000 volumes fill the ground floor of his house.

the memoirs of Binodini Dasi, a stage actress in the 19th century. Our magazine is now much sought after by students of women's studies."

Nirmalya takes me to the office of a fellow publisher, down a narrow side alley off Mahatma Gandhi Road. In one room, a man in a dhoti and a rag of an undershirt is cranking brightly colored magazine covers through an ancient and blackened handpress, something more appropriate to Dickensian London than to the era of desktop publishing. Isn't it perhaps a myth that Calcutta is still the midwife of the small literary magazine?

"There are probably 2,000 small magazines published here," Nirmalya says. "But it is becoming very difficult these days. Paper costs 15 times as much as it did when we started *Ekshan*, and printing costs have increased tenfold. My friend here is thinking of winding up this press. It's just not viable anymore."

What about the future of *Ekshan*, I ask? "Soumitra left as editor many years ago because his acting career took off. This is now a one-man show. And for the last few years our publication has become irregular. I can now manage only one issue a year, although I hope to bring it back out as a quarterly soon. Normally, we print two, maybe three thousand copies. Advertising covers my costs and Mr. Ray still designs the covers. But we have a growing readership so I have to make the effort." He pauses thoughtfully. "Somehow, I always wanted to be a writer. But I came out an editor, which was not my intention at all!"

Only a short distance from Nirmalya's home, up Mahatma Gandhi Road and down Tamer Lane, is the home of Sandip Dutt. Sandip is a schoolteacher, but he's also the proprietor of the Little Magazine Library and Research Centre, 12,000 volumes stacked right up to the ceiling, occupying every inch of wall space on the first floor of his home.

"I started this in 1978 because no one looks after the small and obscure magazines," Sandip tells me. "It is my love and duty to look after these little magazines and make them available to the people." Four afternoons a week, after he returns from work, Sandip opens his doors and allows students and researchers for an annual fee of 50 cents to come and ferret through his treasures. Sandip shows me magazines printed on banana leaves, rolled in cigarettes and stuffed into matchboxes. With real pride he brings out a rare first edition of *Bangadarshan* from 1872, and a copy of a short-lived magazine published and edited by a domestic worker in the late 1960s.

"Have you ever published a magazine?" I ask, somewhat naively. "Oh yes! I publish three magazines for my public." Sandip continues the tour. "I started this collection with 1,500 magazines. Now I receive 4 or 5 new ones every day. The problem is space. There's some left in that room," he says, leading me into a third room, christened Poetry Books Library. "What happens when that's full?" I ask. Sandip rolls his eyes upward. "It's going to move up to the next floor, isn't it?" Another roll of the eyes. "I have a duty to these magazines."

As I leave the Little Magazine Library, Sandip takes my arm. "Remember," he tells me earnestly, "Bengalis want to express their ideas. They're not so much interested in material things. They're much happier pursuing intellectual ideas."

None more so than my friend Raja Chatterjee. Raja

never seems to have held a steady job. But he has a profession—being a Bengali intellectual. Raja looks the part, clad in a white dhoti and top, and carrying a cloth shoulder bag jammed with books, notebooks and pencils. Somehow he finds work, at the film studios, or helping to mount an experimental translation of Anouilh or Brecht or Dürrenmatt at one of the city's innumerable small theaters. He's just finished helping his friend Malay produce a series of half-hour television programs of Bengali short stories. Each episode cost $3,000 to make, impossibly cheap for any Western producer but a fortune for Malay and his wife, who have put all their savings into the series.

Raja lives in South Calcutta, near the famous Kali Temple, with his wife, Runu, and daughter, Sonali, and Runu's widowed mother, who spent several years in the Soviet Union as an interpreter. She speaks and reads Russian, Bengali, Hindi and English. The house is full of books—Tagore, of course, Maxim Gorky, Byron and Shelley, lots of Shakespeare—and an upright piano. Runu has been going blind for several years now but still teaches piano at a private school. "Come round to dinner tonight. We will prepare a special Bengali fish curry for you," she tells me. "My daughter also wants you to hear her play the piano."

That evening, 12-year-old Sonali plays short pieces by Mozart and Grieg. Then Runu plays the first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" and a Strauss waltz. Runu apologizes profusely for the sound of the piano: "It must be tuned. But when is the tuner coming?" Raja promises to get the tuner tomorrow. But I doubt he can make much of a difference now. The constant humidity has badly altered the sound. Imagine Beethoven played on a barroom piano in the Wild West. The effect is surreal and very Calcutta.

A half-mile of bookshops and bookstalls

After supper, Raja wants me to meet his friends Dakoo and Kumar at the coffeehouse off College Street, a half-mile of bookshops and bookstalls spilling over onto the pavement, carrying first editions, pamphlets, paperbacks in every Indian language, with more than a fair smattering of books in and out of print from France, Germany, Russia and England.

Dakoo is a cartoonist. He's drawn a small book of cartoons on Calcutta's 300th birthday for me. Sometimes, one of the daily papers publishes his work. The rest of the time he just draws and waits. Kumar works in one of the city's luxury hotels, supervising room service. But every morning he writes a poem. Kumar and Raja both write naturally in English. English is as much a language of Calcutta as Bengali. Kumar has never sought a publisher; he wants to know my reactions to his poems. Raja also writes poetry and has had no problem finding someone to publish 500 copies of 60-odd pages of his poetry in hardback.

Kumar and Dakoo, believers in the intellectual life, hang out at a tea shop, where they debate endlessly.

Raja, Kumar and Dakoo may never be famous, but they are pursuing the right of every Calcuttan and every Bengali to be an intellectual or an artist. No one snickers.

Driving through Calcutta one day, Raja suddenly blurts out: "Chief! What about this Jack Kerouac? You know him? I am very much liking this man." Raja has read Kerouac in Bengali. Romantic images of a footloose Kerouac obviously appeal to the Bengali psyche.

At times this obsession with culture seems so self-conscious that one wonders if it isn't really motivated by something else: a fear that Bengali culture will be diluted by the presence of so many non-Bengalis in Calcutta. And also by the Calcuttans' need to reassure themselves that their city still counts on the world cultural stage, when so many in the West and India have written it off as a provincial backwater and worse.

Supporting Calcutta's literary and artistic climate is the vitality of Calcutta's ordinary, everyday culture. Without this broad foundation, the city would indeed become a city only of intellectuals. But this everyday

Dakoo is a cartoonist who occasionally sells his work; Kumar, a hotel steward, pens one poem every morning.

culture is threatened as well. "Much of what the West calls folk culture is dead art, kept alive on life-support systems from the West. It has no social function anymore," says Radha Prasad Gupta, a retired public relations officer for Tata Iron and Steel, and now one of the city's unofficial historians.

Few visitors interested in Calcutta fail to visit R. P. Gupta. I first got to know him because he had written a small volume in Bengali called *The Cries of Calcutta Streets.* Naturally intrigued as a radio producer, I hoped to find an archive of tape recordings. No such luck. R. P. Gupta's catalog of sounds existed only on paper. But he offered me the services of his young assistant—Raja Chatterjee. So now, on every visit to the city, Raja and I make the pilgrimage to R. P.'s flat, which is full of old prints of the city in its glory days.

Gupta argues that what remains today of Calcutta's working-class culture exists precisely because it is utilitarian in nature. "The film director Jean Renoir took back several huge clay storage pots to Hollywood after he had finished filming *The River* here," he says. "He was fascinated by their sensuality, their curves, the belly where the grain is stored. But they are beautiful precisely because they're household objects—because they are practical."

By that token, one of Calcutta's most famous indigenous folk forms is an endangered species. Kalighat, or "bazaar," paintings are usually watercolors—very colorful, often strongly satirical, sometimes bawdy. They were sold as cheap souvenirs to the pilgrims who came to the Kali Temple in South Calcutta. But the postcard and mass reproduction spelled their demise. "You want to see Kalighat paintings? No problem! There are some in the Metro. Let's go, Chief!" And Raja whisks me out the door of the apartment and down the stairs to the street. It's raining. Raja shouts a command in Bengali and two ricksha-wallahs at a nearby stand pick up their rickshas and wade through brown water two feet deep to the doorstep.

Riding Metro just to see the artwork

We cross Chowringhee to what looks like a small ventilation shaft, where we climb out of our rickshas. Raja leads me down some steps into the world of the Calcutta subway, known as Metro, the city's pride and joy, even though there's only one line and it's only a third complete. Each station is decorated with paintings and sculptures. When we reach the Kalighat station, sure enough, reproductions of Kalighat paintings hang on the walls. Other stations display reproductions of paintings by Tagore or early scenes of European Calcutta. Many Calcuttans, says Raja, ride Metro just to see the artwork. There's another attraction, too: each station has several color television sets, which show popular films or cricket matches.

Although Kalighat paintings may now mostly be seen in the Metro, there are still many forms of popular culture that retain vitality and an audience. The easiest way to find them is to spend a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon on the Maidan. Here, under the shadow of an extraordinary tower built in memory of Sir David Ochterlony (an eccentric member of the East India Company who liked to parade his 14 Indian mistresses, each mounted on an elephant), street performers entertain the working men and women of Calcutta. Quack doctors draw eager crowds: "Miracle medicine to cure stomach pains and improve sexual energies!" claims a 70-year-old huckster. The medicine appears to be a cross between black licorice and tar. The old man dismisses my skepticism: "Look at me! I am 70. I have three daughters, three wives and 18 sons!" Raja is keen for me to buy some lumps for him.

We also encounter a fortune-teller, whose parrot steps out of a tiny cage and selects an envelope at random; and a family of acrobats, two members of which pound drums while, on a high wire six feet above the grass, three small children contort themselves

through a tiny metal hoop, then take a bow. It may not be high art, but only a monsoon downpour will keep away the thousands of people who come.

On Monday morning the Maidan is deserted again. Raja and I go back into North Calcutta, to Kumartuli, a former red-light district but also home to the image makers of Calcutta. The easiest way to get there is by taxi. Throughout all the years I've been coming to Calcutta I've been driven by Tivari, a Brahman from Uttar Pradesh, who lives here with his father and brother. I think my Western habits must have shocked Tivari when I first met him. Highly literate and a devoted follower of Rama, the legendary God-King of Ayodhya and hero of *The Ramayana,* Tivari determined to educate me. On my second visit he had acquired a tape deck in his taxi. He would endlessly play *bhajans,* popular devotional hymns to the greater glory of Rama and Krishna, sung by a popular "playback" singer.

In the end Tivari won. I needed a tape of *bhajans* for a radio program. Tivari promptly obliged. In return he asked for cassettes of my programs. Now his customers have a choice: *bhajans* or National Public Radio, although the speed is seriously off on his machine, and I can scarcely recognize my own voice.

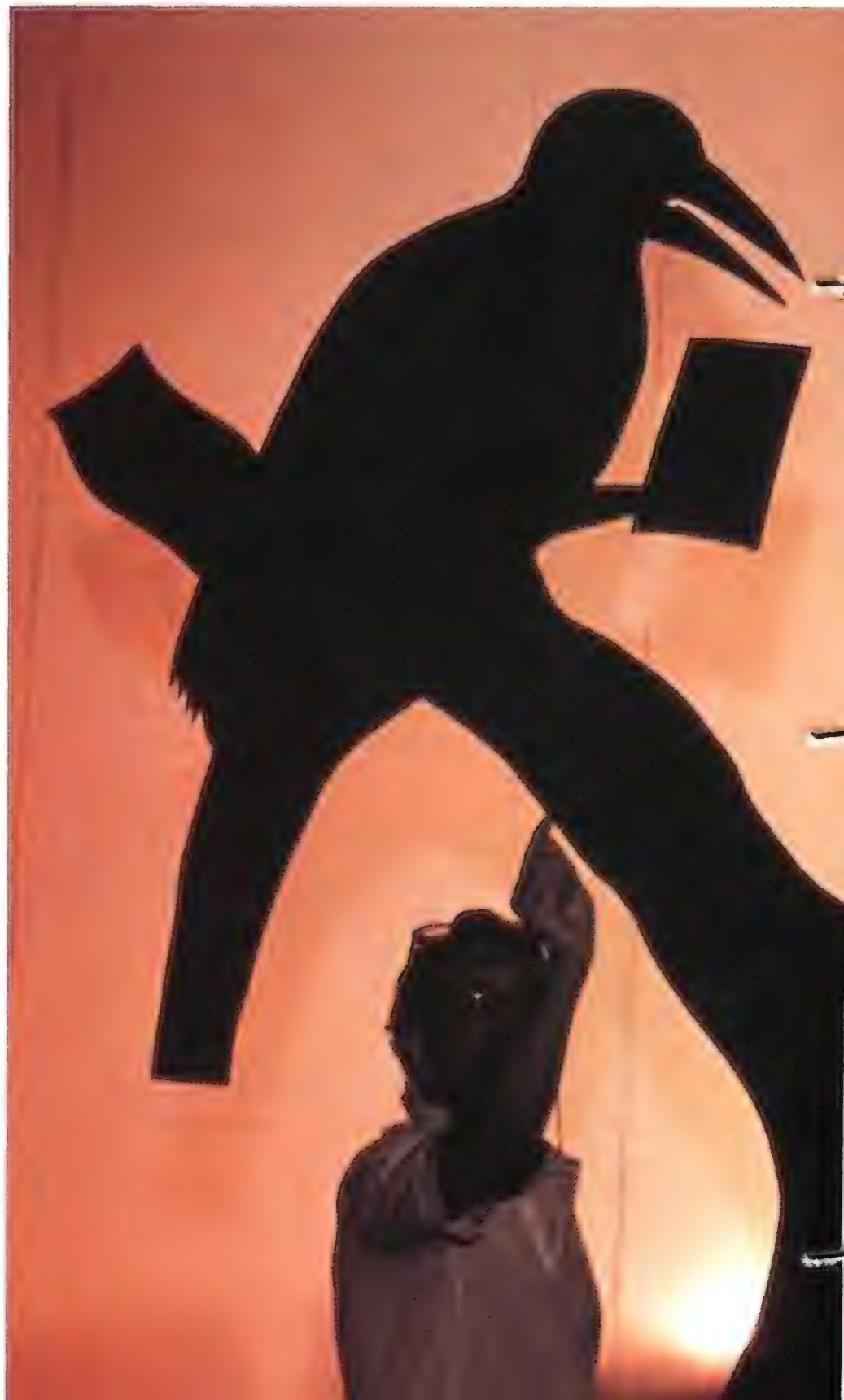
Kumartuli is a rabbit warren of sheds, workshops and alleys where some 4,000 potters shape bamboo, straw and clay into life-size reproductions of gods and goddesses. Since Calcutta's unofficial patron is the Mother Goddess, major festivals, or pujas, are held each year to celebrate her various aspects. The potters make images for these festivals, including Durga, who rides a lion and destroys demons. She is worshiped for four days, usually in early October. Kali, a more terrifying form of the goddess, with her protruding tongue and garland of skulls, is celebrated a month later.

During our visit, many of the potters are preparing for the upcoming Durga Puja. We watch as one of them, hard at work, smooths gray clay onto a large straw-and-bamboo frame. He learned how to make images from his father; for most of the potters, image making is a caste profession going back several generations.

Others, such as Aloke Sen, a former art student, use images as tools of social criticism. His images of Saraswati, goddess of learning, depict her in chains. "I want to show the slavery of today's education, where children are just stuffed with facts," he says.

Sen's Durga images have become famous because of their ambiguity. Sen refuses the crude depiction of the demons that Durga slays as the epitome of evil. He sculpts them with the faces of ordinary men and women. "They represent the evils in the hearts of every man—lust, anger, vanity, infatuation, jealousy and greed," he asserts. His tableaus, which show Durga mounted on a lion and slaying a demon, will fetch him about $20,000. They will grace four of the largest neighborhood stages set up by street committees. For four days and nights of the Durga Puja, people will flock to see these works of art. On the fourth night, each neighborhood committee will take down its Durga images, place them on bamboo stretchers and carry them to the banks of the Hooghly.

Five years ago, Raja decided I must experience my first Durga Puja from the vantage point of the ordinary Calcuttan. He instructed Tivari to drop us off en route to the river, right in the middle of several hun-



Satyajit Ray directs the 1987 filming of a documentary about his father, a master of Bengali nonsense verse.

dred Bengali musicians. Together we marched through the night to the tune of something I still believe was meant to be "Scotland the Brave," played by Bengali bagpipers clad only in dhotis. Once at the water's edge all hell broke loose. Each team bearing a Durga image maneuvered down the muddy embankment and then heaved it into the water, where it would dissolve back into clay, straw and bamboo on its way to the Ganges.

Durga Puja is Aloke Sen's personal vindication as an artist. But it is also his nightmare: "These images are my creation. They are like my sons and daughters. Now the studio is full. But soon it will be empty, and the suffering will begin. It is unbearable for me to watch them putting my images, my children, into the Ganga!"

On the scale of human suffering, Aloke Sen fares better than most Calcuttans. Yet perhaps, in the final analysis, it's the struggle to survive amid decay and death that gives so many Calcutta artists and writers their subject matter. "With problems you have food for creation. You have your material," says Satyajit Ray. "If you're living in Stockholm all you can do is make films like Bergman does, about human beings and all the psychological this and that."

Raja and Dakoo agree. Their work is obsessed by their love-hate relationship with the city and its problems. This tension is best summed up by filmmaker and actress Aparna Sen, who also edits Calcutta's leading women's magazine. She freely admits she hates the city, then adds, "But I know what it looks like in the morning, in the evening. I know what the streets are like and how the shadows fall . . . even though I hate it I can't think of working anywhere else!"

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Looking more like Daffy Duck than a wily predator, double-crested cormorant flops onto a Southern pond.

By Richard Conniff

Why catfish farmers want to throttle the crow of the sea

Because it eats their crops, that's why. But there's more to cormorants than larceny, as scientists in the Midwest are finding out

Research suggests that the big bird's impact on some fish populations may actually be beneficial to Man.

On a winter afternoon in the flat, wet landscape of the Mississippi Delta, it is a common sight these days to see an untidy string of 10 or 20 cormorants thrashing across the gray horizon. As they head west, the cormorants link up with another string coming in from their feeding grounds, and then another, until, as they pass overhead, they form a long, undulating strand of perhaps 200 dusky birds. At their roost, which may be 30 miles away, as many as 10,000 cormorants will fly in for the night. In the bare branches of a tupelo-and-cypress swamp, they perch 50 to 60 in every tree for hundreds of yards around, and they keep coming until dark, as if a painter were spattering India ink over and over across the treetops.

In the Delta, as in much of North America, cormorants were uncommon as little as ten years ago. But in the early 1970s, the bird began an extraordinary recovery from the effects of pesticides and human persecution, and it is now rapidly reclaiming its old range. This has caused little joy and lots of hostile muttering from San Diego to the Chesapeake Bay.

Human antipathy toward cormorants dates back at least to Deuteronomy, which declared them unclean, and this ancient, almost pathological, ill will has revived among fishermen and fish farmers everywhere, but especially in the Mississippi Delta. Progressive farmers there began kissing cotton goodbye in the late 1970s, scooping out the local buckshot clay to create 90,000 acres of high-profit catfish ponds. On their annual migration from the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast, cormorants spotted these rich new wetlands and promptly reappraised their vacation plans. A new destination was born: the Delta had become the catfish-farming capital of the world just in time to become the cormorant capital, too.

"There ain't nothing good about 'em"

On any winter evening, 35,000 cormorants now return to roosts around the Delta. Traveling with them, in cargo, are perhaps 20,000 pounds of catfish, which might be worth $16,000 were they not already in advanced stages of digestion. It is a thought to stir feelings of profound theological turmoil in a catfish farmer's belly. "It's horrible," says one. "There ain't nothing good about 'em. I'm sure God put 'em here for something, but I don't know what it is."

Shoot. What any former cotton farmer knows in his heart is that God put cormorants here to take the place of the boll weevil.

The cormorant, for those of you who haven't had the pleasure, is a large black waterbird resembling a cross between a crow and an eel. Its name literally means "crow of the sea," and it is a member of the pelican order. But while a pelican flies with a kind of gliding grace, neck folded back, the cormorant is all get-ahead motion. It hurtles along with neck out, head slightly up and wings constantly flapping, clocking 50 miles an hour at times, but somehow looking as if it must struggle just to stay airborne.

The cormorant moves more gracefully underwater than in the air, which is the main reason people in the Delta don't much like it. A catfish farmer will be out tending one of his ponds when a flock of cormorants will splash down two ponds over and float for a few minutes. As the mood arises, the birds lift their wings to shake the air out of their feathers. Then, one by one,

Scarecrow stationed at a catfish pond in Mississippi is mounted on battery-powered compressor. Every five minutes it inflates (left), stands up (center) and then "screeches" (right), before deflating. Cormorants flee.

they disappear underwater, apparently using the small round stones often found in their gut as a kind of diver's weight belt. The bird's feathers are interwoven much more loosely than in other waterfowl, making the cormorant more "wettable" and less buoyant. It swims underwater with its wings folded along its slender body, its long, sinuous neck curving inquisitively from side to side, and its large eyes alert behind clear inner lids, like the nictitating membranes in certain reptiles. A swimming cormorant is a bit like Daffy Duck in goggles.

Simultaneous thrusts of its webbed feet provide enough propulsion for a cormorant to tailgate a fish and catch it crosswise in its hooked bill. It can catch fish even at a depth of 80 feet, staying under for as long as a minute. By comparison, a short dip in a six-foot-deep pond boiling with, say, 175,000 catfish is as easy as Chinese takeout. The cormorant generally brings a fish to the surface after 10 to 20 seconds and flips it in the air to position it correctly and smooth down its spines. Sometimes a flock of cormorants will line up and herd the catfish into a corner. Then they take wing again with full gullets and move two or three ponds farther along just about the time the farmhands arrive at the first pond with their shotguns, pyrotechnic "bird bangers" and all the other futile instruments of anticormorant outrage.

Even without this catfish cafeteria, the cormorant is wily enough to get by on about a half-hour of honest work per day, if one can properly apply that term to what is, of course, fishing. Otherwise, cormorants mostly loaf. You can see them hanging around on rivers, lakes and harbors almost anywhere in the world. Their appearance always suggests something other than cormorants. Hence the existence of such common nicknames as "water turkey," "crow duck" and even "shark."

On the water, they ride low, with only their necks and heads visible, like submarines with their periscopes up or miniature Loch Ness monsters. On rocks or pilings, they like to perch upright with their scraggly wings spread out to dry, Dracula-fashion. In breeding season, many of the 25 or more cormorant species sprout feathery crests. The most common of these in North America is known as the double-crested cormorant, though for much of the year its head is as smooth and slicked-back as a tango dancer's. This combination of mutability with a netherworldly appearance has sometimes evoked images of the devil. In *Paradise Lost*, for example, John Milton wrote that Satan "sat like a cormorant" on the Tree of Life, preparing to work mischief in the Garden of Eden. It is almost enough to make the catfish farmers of Mississippi attempt exorcism.

They have tried everything else. A couple of seasons back, for example, a radio-controlled-aircraft enthusiast named Cooper Kimbrell spent several mornings waging a small-scale Battle of Britain over a catfish farm. Kimbrell is happy to re-create that moment in history for a visitor. He stands with the tail of his aircraft restrained between his ankles as the engine whines up to full speed. On the fuselage, a painted "storm lizard" extends a forked tongue and appears to flex its claws cormorantward. When Kimbrell releases the plane, it climbs rapidly, and he puts it through loops and snap rolls, then sends it screaming down like a dive-bomber. "A bird hears that coming at him," he says, "he turns and runs the other way."

Richard Conniff, who traveled North and South to report on this story, enjoys a cormorant colony near his home on the Connecticut River.

Unhindered by scare tactics, a flagrant poacher flaunts impressive catch before swallowing it whole.

To try out the technique for local fish farmers, Kimbrell and a couple of fellow hobbyists positioned themselves on the dirt levees dividing the catfish ponds and waited for a squadron of cormorants to approach from its night roost. When birds began to peel off for a descent, Kimbrell's plane went up to meet them: "I pointed it straight up and held it there and went straight up through them and just hoped that I was the one that came out on top." As the cormorants broke right and left, he pursued them, and here Kimbrell sounds like a Spitfire pilot recounting a dogfight: "You had to concentrate at things you weren't sure you could do, and you just did 'em. You found you were a better instinctive pilot." Kimbrell stayed on one bird's tail close enough that the cormorant craned its head back in midflight to see what was chasing it, then folded its wings and plunged underwater from 15 feet up. The catfish farmers thought it was the best show they had seen in years. In the cold light of dawn they also realized that aerial warfare would cost money, not just for wages, but for the planes, which one agricultural extension agent describes as "expensive little buggers." In a Louisiana trial a plane hit a cormorant, more or less accidentally. The bird lived. The plane didn't.

Most farms now rely on less entertaining methods. Butane cannon boom at intervals across the ponds—and also provide perches for cormorants, which are smart enough to know they are firing blanks. On some farms a jack-in-the-box scarecrow, called "man-in-a-cannon," leaps out of a 55-gallon drum with an ineffectual bang. Other farms have experimented with a device called "air crow," which deploys revolving strobe lights and inflatable plastic arms, along with the sound of horns honking, people shouting, shotguns firing and birds screaming at a reported volume of 130 decibels. A cormorant can get used to almost anything.

Killing them has of course occurred to one or two fish farmers in bleak moments of aquacultural despair. But cormorants have been afforded federal protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act since 1972. In some cases, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will issue a permit allowing a farmer to kill up to 200 or so birds a year, with the idea of making the air crows and other instruments of harassment more credible to discerning cormorants. But the paperwork is onerous, and farmers protest—perhaps too much—that killing cormorants isn't easy. They fly away if people get close, and at a distance, especially on the water surface, they make meager targets. "They're tough birds," a farmer says. "Nothing to 'em but bones. There's nothing to kill."

That is not quite the case. In California, the USFWS recently convicted one fish farm with a 50-bird permit of illegally killing 15,000 birds over five years, including herons as well as cormorants. Minimum-wage field hands, ill equipped to distinguish between a water turkey and a bald eagle, apparently blazed away at anything with wings, even hawks and ducks that don't consume fish.

The result is that battle lines are beginning to form. With aquaculture expanding and natural wetlands dwindling because of development, fish farms can become a magnet for an area's entire population of some waterfowl species. Because of the risk to these birds, federal officials are reluctant to issue special cormorant-killing permits. Angry fish farmers, who are by and large wealthy businesspeople, have turned to Congress for help. One result is that researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's controversial Animal Damage Control unit, best known for killing coyotes to benefit Western ranchers, have recently moved into the Delta to contemplate the cormorant.

Among farmers, a siege mentality

Fish farmers don't talk about what they hope will result, except that it should be "something big-time, in the roost, with federal sanction." Privately they are pushing for a standard depredation order, which would allow liberalized killing of cormorants even on open waters. To make this politically more palatable, they are trying to convince people that the country is being overrun by cormorants. This is, of course, merely God's honest truth to a catfish farmer who did not even see his first cormorant until seven years ago but recently had 16,000 of them roosting in sight of his ponds, or to one Texas shrimp farmer whose cormorant losses were estimated at $25,000 a week "till he drained the dagblamed ponds." They see themselves under siege. "Y'all give us a break," an equipment supplier calls out when he spots a reporter doing inter-

The bird fish farmers love to hate

Feathers soften sticks under and around eggs in cormorant nests. Some nests are reoccupied for years.

views at a catfish restaurant in Belzoni, Mississippi. "We ain't trying to destroy them. They're trying to destroy us."

This is a venerable sentiment among fishermen, who have fumed for centuries over the cormorant's ability to go underwater and catch fish when intelligent humans can't even get a nibble. Idle minds have often leapt to the conclusion that the cormorants were taking all the fish. From there it was another small leap to the misguided idea of conserving game by killing cormorants. As in the case of bats, killing cormorants was particularly easy because of ingrained human prejudice against them.

Not only does the cormorant resemble the devil, but its gullet is large and its purported greed is legendary. Though the typical adult stands just three feet tall, cormorants have been known to take fish of up to 16 inches in length or to contain as many as eight smaller fish at a time, in various stages of digestion. Chaucer considered them synonymous with gluttony, and Shakespeare described Time, that devourer of life, as a cormorant. Usurers were once "money-cormorants," and the bird itself has in places been nicknamed "lawyer," presumably because of its alleged avarice. These unsavory cultural associations persisted into the 1970s, when a faction of Cambodia's genocidal Khmer Rouge revolutionaries became known as "cormorants."

In China and Japan, the historical response of fishermen to the apparent competition from cormorants was to domesticate them and work them like prized retrievers, using a hemp or leather collar to keep the birds from swallowing their catch. The usual Western response, on the other hand, was mayhem. Queen Elizabeth I authorized a bounty on cormorants and other "ravening birds and vermin." In this country, fishermen placed leg-hold traps on perching sites and visited nesting colonies in the summer to drop large rocks on the eggs. On top of this persecution, widespread use of the pesticide DDT caused cormorant eggshells to become so thin that they crumbled under the brooding parent's own feet. In Wisconsin, where huge flocks once nested, only 66 breeding pairs remained by 1972.

Cormorants are getting a bum rap

The most peculiar thing about the long persecution of cormorants is that there appears to have been hardly any reason for it. Over the past century, more than 125 scientific papers have examined the cormorant's dietary predilections. They indicate that in normal circumstances, the cormorant mainly catches fish in which humans have no interest—alewives, for example, in the Great Lakes. It also preys on suckers, sticklebacks, ling, sculpin and other species that eat the spawn

Silhouetted against the evening sky, ungainly birds roost atop bald cypress trees in the Atchafalaya Basin of southern Louisiana. Catfish ponds lure more than 35,000 cormorants to roost in the Mississippi Delta.

of commercially valuable fish. So in theory, the cormorant's choice of food may actually benefit humans.

But sportsmen tend to believe what they think they see with their own eyes. For example, near Watertown, New York, on Lake Ontario, more than 4,000 cormorant breeding pairs now nest on Little Galloo Island. Local fishing guides have accused the birds of eating trout and salmon fingerlings stocked by the state. A simple solution proposed by biologists was to stock fingerlings at night, when cormorants don't fish, but even this proved unnecessary on more careful consideration: the fish found liberally strewn around nests on Little Galloo almost always turned out to be alewives, not salmon or trout. The guides have nonetheless petitioned for an open season on cormorants. In Quebec, wildlife officials have actually begun a culling program to kill 2,000 cormorants a year in the islands of the St. Lawrence River and snuff out cormorant eggs with a suffocating oil spray, ostensibly to protect other birds and their habitat.

The one place where humans have a legitimate gripe against cormorants is where we have ourselves created an unnatural concentration of fish. Cormorants, always opportunists, are old hands at this sort of thing. In the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California, a painting by Vittore Carpaccio from 1495 depicts fishing enclosures on a Venetian lagoon. Cormorants are everywhere—ducking underwater, floating with only their heads and necks visible, perching on the fishermen's fences. Seven boats patrol the waters, and in the bow of each boat an archer fires pellets at the birds (p. 52). What seems to be going on here is a 15th-century version of predator control—and for the same reason as in the Mississippi Delta: cormorants can pose a real threat to any concentrated fishery.

Federal researchers last year examined the stomach contents of 136 cormorants in the fish farms of the Mississippi Delta and found that 64 percent of their diet consisted of catfish. The fish farmers themselves estimated their direct losses at $3 million a year, plus $2.1 million for butane cannon and the like.

Losses from other factors can be at least as bad. Indeed, according to the Department of Agriculture's own statistics, 70 percent of catfish losses nationally are due to disease and another 10 percent to oxygen depletion; birds account for only 7 percent of the total. But none of these threats is so damnably visible as the cormorant, nor so well suited for an angry letter to one's Congressman. Moreover, there is something inwardly rankling about the knowledge that the cormorant problem is getting worse at least in part because of the fish farmers themselves. A full winter of rich Southern food is surely one reason why cormorants nesting in the Great Lakes are now showing population increases of 15 to 63 percent *a year*. "They have this cafeteria here," a spokesman for the Delta catfish farmers concedes. "They head North with a half-inch of fat on them, and all four eggs hatch, and then—here they come again."

On Little Gull Island at the mouth of Wisconsin's

Michigan ecologist Jim Ludwig holds cormorant born with deformity he links to pollution of Great Lakes.

vast Green Bay, 700 pairs of cormorants now nest each summer. The nests are whitened platforms of interwoven branches, clustered together everywhere on the rocks and in the trees. Having been reoccupied and continually improved over the years, some stand a foot tall, or more. The males move in first each spring and sing seductively to every passing female. Researchers have unkindly likened the cormorant's *oak-oak-oak* love song to the sound of human belching or to "the series of choking sounds sometimes made by a cat, but . . . more rapid." Cormorants nonetheless have twice the breeding rate of other waterfowl. Moreover, they form affectionate couples, with the male frequently bringing the female gifts of fresh nesting material, and with both parents sharing chick-rearing duties. Human or other intrusion causes them to flee the area temporarily, leaving their young vulnerable to heat, vandalism or predation by the herring gulls that commonly share the nesting site. Otherwise, they are devoted and attentive parents.

When people try to describe cormorants, the words "primitive" or "reptilian" often come to mind, and a cormorant nesting site looks much as one would imagine a dinosaur breeding colony. Guano has whitewashed the rocks, and the phosphoric acid in it has killed the vegetation and turned the trees where some birds perch into ruined hulks. Cormorants old enough to leave the nest but not to fly stand together in large groups, each of them like an upright, elongated *S* written in heavy ink across a bleached-out wasteland. The short, underdeveloped-looking wings and the shape of the skull suggest *Archaeopteryx*, the putative link between dinosaurs and birds. To pull itself up out of a crevice, a cormorant uses its wings, its scaly, reptilian feet and, finally, its hooked bill to find a purchase and clamber up onto the rock surface. It is as if evolution were occurring in a single animal's lifetime, or as if the cormorant were a creature in metamorphosis.

"No-no-no, not me, not me"

Younger birds still confined to the nest rear up when a human approaches and squeal *aaah-aaah-aaah*, with their pinkish-yellow mouths gaping in fear. Gular sacs, fleshy evaporative cooling devices at the top of the throat, flutter, and their heads waggle anxiously as if to say, "No-no-no, not me, not me." Several nests contain featherless hatchlings only a few days old; the bones move visibly beneath their leathery black skin.

The human intruder today is a population ecologist named Jim Ludwig (left), who is president of the Michigan Audubon Society and also of his own firm, Ecological Research Services, in Ann Arbor. Ludwig is a burly 49-year-old with a jutting jaw and blue eyes behind thick, smoke-colored bifocals. He wears a T-shirt and stained blue jeans, and his forearms are so cut up from handling cormorants that when he recently tried to obtain hypodermic needles to take blood samples, the nurses mistook him for a junkie. He started studying birds on Lakes Huron and Michigan in 1959, and for the first ten years he did not see a single nesting cormorant. Last summer in the same territory he visited 28 cormorant nesting colonies, logging 7,500 miles in his battered research boat.

On Little Gull, Ludwig approaches a group of 5- and 6-week-old birds, then suddenly bounds in among them, grabbing four by the neck and carrying them out, limp as dead turkeys. He sits down on the rocks and tucks the birds under his legs, talking to them gently. Then he wraps a towel around one bird's head, stretches out its wing and lays it on its back across his lap so an assistant can take a blood sample. Afterward, the bird shakes itself and stumbles off even more awkwardly than usual.

While the cormorant's reproductive prowess may be daunting for fish farmers, Ludwig believes it makes the species an ideal early-warning system for environmental hazards, a kind of canary-in-the-mineshaft for the entire Great Lakes. What Ludwig and a small group of

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The bird fish farmers love to hate

J. Paul Getty Museum

Detail of a 1495 painting by Vittore Carpaccio depicts archers dispatching cormorants in a Venetian lagoon.

Canadian and American researchers have inadvertently been developing is a perverse answer to the Mississippi catfish farmer's question about "what God put 'em here for," or to its inevitable secular corollary, "What use are they to humans, anyway?" One tentative answer is that research on the booming cormorant population may prevent human suffering—particularly among people who eat fish—and spare us from human stupidity. Unfortunately, if the research findings turn out to be correct, they could also produce an economic impact that will make the catfish farmers' woes dwindle into nothingness.

Standing on Little Gull Island, Ludwig likens the Great Lakes, which contain 20 percent of the world's fresh water, to a huge bathtub with no outlet. It takes Green Bay alone 15 years to achieve a single change of water, he says. What goes into the water stays there, accumulating in the flesh of fish and ultimately in the people or cormorants that eat the fish. What went into the Great Lakes in the 1960s and '70s were polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, organic compounds used in lubricants, heat-transfer fluids and about 300 other products. Most government monitoring programs now show the total PCB burden in the Great Lakes to be declining as a result of a 1976 ban on such compounds, which were found to be carcinogenic. But Ludwig calls this reassurance false. "We believe U.S. state and federal regulatory agencies have measured generally the wrong things with the wrong techniques, and failed to look at the real world to ascertain if fewer biological effects have occurred in step with reduced contamination as measured by totals."

Crow of the sea as effective PCB alarm

Waterbirds can concentrate toxic residues at 25 million times the levels present in the water, and Ludwig routinely finds PCBs in his cormorant blood samples. Moreover, he believes that the decline in the total PCB level in the lakes may disguise increased proportions of the most toxic PCBs for cormorants and humans. The booming cormorant population provides a means of quantifying the effects of this change, and what Ludwig is learning is that reproductive defects and deformities are increasing.

Crouching by the edge of the water with a cartonful of dead cormorant eggs, Ludwig cracks them one by one and examines their contents. Most are infertile, but after three eggs he cradles an underdeveloped embryo in his fingers: "Twenty-five days," he says. "Severe head and neck edema. Let's jar this one. This is one of the PCB- or dioxin-like symptoms we're seeing." In three of the dozen eggs, the embryos have these swollen, goiterous necks. Ludwig notes that detecting such a phenomenon in mammals would be

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difficult, since defective embryos tend to be absorbed into the lining of the uterus or aborted and lost. Because cormorants develop so rapidly after hatching, they also display growth abnormalities more noticeably than do mammals. On a single visit to Little Gull in 1990, Ludwig found seven hatchlings with crossed bills, four with eye defects and a couple with leg deformities.

Other researchers from the United States and Canada have corroborated Ludwig's findings of reproductive impairments in cormorants and other species, including bald eagles and trout. One survey of mammals that eat only fish suggests that some mink and otters have stopped reproducing altogether along much of the Great Lakes shoreline. Other studies in humans show that women who have consumed PCB-laden fish from Lake Michigan give birth to children with smaller head size and poorer neuromuscular development. Public health departments advise against eating Great Lakes fish regularly, if at all. But no government agency has yet followed Ludwig in making the leap from cormorants to humans and concluding that reproductive problems are getting worse because of PCBs. "The implication of declaring that this is what's going on," says one scientist, would be to necessitate "a multibillion-dollar cleanup."

It would be a lovely, if bittersweet, turnabout were such a cleanup to become a moral necessity because of what researchers can see happening in cormorants. The bird might then be transformed in the convoluted human mind from agent of the devil to environmental archangel. But this is surely wishful thinking. A bird that enlightens society about a problem—one for which the enormous costs of a solution are far easier to calculate than the eventual savings in human health—is always going to seem more like a headache than a hero.

What we can extract from the cormorant's strange tale, then, is merely a lesson in how complex nature can be, how difficult it is to characterize its changing manifestations as "good" or "bad," and how cautious we should be about the urge to tamper with it. There are unforeseen consequences in everything we do.

For the catfish farmers, who are in any case unlikely to win approval to kill large numbers of cormorants, it may still be possible to obtain a measure of peace. Rather than beseeching Uncle Sam for relief, it may prove less troublesome in the end for them to sit back and shrewdly consider their adversary, then adapt their own methods accordingly. Cormorants are not great aerialists, for example. They need room to land and even more room to take off. With its wings flapping, splashing like a kid in loose galoshes, a cormorant may run along the surface of a catfish pond for 30 to 40 yards before it becomes airborne. Putting a net across a pond to keep them out costs too much—$22,000 for a 20-acre pond, in one estimate. So researchers at Texas A&M University dug long, narrow ponds, then strung black twine across them at 30-foot intervals, perpendicular to the prevailing winds. For a total cost of $13 an acre, they found they could play havoc with

Downy youngsters enjoy the Florida sun. As adults, cormorants are prolific breeders and attentive parents.

cormorant flight patterns and save catfish for harvest.

This elegant solution may not come as great news to a farmer who has just invested huge sums to dig 500 acres worth of big blocky catfish ponds laid out like cormorant runways. But there is another alternative: he can work on improving his harassment methods and learn to swallow his cormorant losses as just another cost of doing business, like disease or oxygen depletion. Relief may not come immediately, but it will come. Eagles, owls or some other predators will move in on the cormorants—or the alewife population in the Great Lakes will nosedive. PCBs may ultimately overcome the cormorant's reproductive capabilities, as did DDT. One way or another, the booming cormorant population will go bust. Unlike the devil, cormorants are not eternal. Or as a wildlife agent puts it, a tad ruefully, "Didn't there used to be something called the balance of nature?"

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By Timothy Green

From a pawnshop to patron of the arts in five centuries

In Siena, a city famous for its Old Masters and crooked horse race, the most remarkable institution is an odd bank with a big heart

"Banking belongs to the Italians," economist John Kenneth Galbraith once observed. The Romans first tried their hand at it, but the real flowering of the banker's art came with the Renaissance, when the bustling city-states of Florence, Genoa, Milan, Siena and Venice and their great family banks were the commercial heart of the Mediterranean world.

None of those family banks remain. By contrast, consider Il Monte dei Paschi di Siena. Its assets now stand at more than $72 billion. It has 562 branches in Italy and overseas offices in New York, as well as in London, Frankfurt and Singapore. Yet it was founded at the height of the Italian Renaissance more than 500 years ago. Leonardo da Vinci was in his 20s then; Michelangelo was a child. The once flourishing Medici bank in nearby Florence had begun its decline under the lax direction of Lorenzo the Magnificent. That much-lauded institution foundered in 1494, just two years after Lorenzo's death. In the ruthless world of finance, clearly, Il Monte dei Paschi di Siena, known as "Il Monte" to its friends, was and is something else again.

Tourists know Siena mostly for the paintings of Lorenzetti and Sassetta, and for the famous Palio, the madcap, crooked horse race around its splendid Piazza del Campo, which twice a year pits *contrada* (city

Among the bank's prized possessions is *Saint Anthony Abbot*, painted in 1423 by Sienese master Sassetta.

Archivist Roberto Rocchigiani holds 1749 ledger with arms of bank benefactor, the grand duke of Tuscany.

President's office, where business is conducted, has 15th-century fresco commemorating founding of bank.

Il Monte's fragile records, open only to authorized scholars, are kept in a climate-controlled archive.

district) against *contrada*. Fortunes change hands at Palio time. But as you drive down the 30-mile Autostrada del Palio that links Florence and Siena, a large roadside sign announces not the Palio but *"MPS, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, Banca dal 1472."* And if, as I did, you talk to Ugo Fatini, one of Il Monte's executive vice presidents, you soon are face-to-face with the bizarre but heartening history of this remarkable institution.

Il Monte started, in part, as a kind of municipal pawnshop. It was dedicated to charging not more but less interest on its loans. The bank, in fact, was not, nor is it now, a bank out to make a profit for shareholders. It has no shareholders except, in a sense, the city and its people. It prides itself not only on being the guardian of Siena's economic well-being but also on its support for city museums and such institutions as the University of Siena and the municipal hospital. Each year up to half of Il Monte's profits may be turned over to charity, welfare and public works for the benefit of the local economy; the autostrada itself was paid for by the bank to provide Siena's modern lifeline to the rest of Italy. The balance of the profits go into reserves, a fundamental reason why for 500 years the bank has been impregnable to financial storms.

This benevolent approach to banking sprang originally from a pragmatic way of avoiding usury—especially the charging of excessive interest on loans—which the Catholic Church regarded as a sin. Il Monte was founded by the city-state of Siena in 1472 precisely to make successful loans while charging only modest interest. That step typifies a crucial evolution in banking during the Renaissance; as trade prospered, an accommodation had to be reached between the dictates of canon law and commercial necessity. But Il Monte was humbler in its origins than the great merchant banks of the Renaissance, whose names have been preserved by history while the institutions themselves are long gone. The bank was designed from the ground up to meet a local social need. Then as now, the very word "banking" covered a broad range of financial services which, as the late Prof. Frederic Lane of Johns Hopkins University put it, can be grouped in three basic divisions: "international bankers, pawnbrokers and local deposit bankers." The Italians called this triumvirate *banchi grossi, banchi di pegni* and *banchi in mercato*. Il Monte dei Paschi started as one of the *banchi di pegni*.

The historical headlines, of course, have always been grabbed by the *banchi grossi*, whose prominence grew from the time of the Crusades until Columbus discovered America, as Italy became the dominant economic power. Italian merchants were the middlemen linking the trade of the Mediterranean and the Levant with Northern Europe. The city-states were the crossroads for spices and silks from the Orient and wool

Timothy Green last wrote for SMITHSONIAN *on perfume. An expert on finance, he is author of a volume entitled* The Prospect for Gold.

Piazza Salimbeni, with statue of Sienese economist Sallustio Banini, is framed by bank's offices and art galleries, sporting the flags of various nations. The first Il Monte, a pawnshop, was opened on this spot.

and textiles from England. Silver and gold as the means of exchange came from mines in Africa, Hungary and Germany (Venice had a special warehouse-cum-hotel on the Grand Canal used by German traders arriving with silver). The great merchant families soon evolved remarkably complex *banchi grossi*, run as partnerships but usually dominated by one family. They operated on a grand scale with offices in several countries, their principal clients being popes and princes, the rulers of church and state. A contemporary chronicler, without tongue in cheek, called these bankers "the Pillars of Christendom."

But such banking families were highly vulnerable. Kings and princes, not to mention popes, were remarkably negligent at paying their debts. Edward III of England secured huge loans from Florentine bankers to finance his military campaigns in France during the Hundred Years' War. In return, though he licensed them to handle the British wool trade, he never repaid his debt, notably contributing to a number of bankruptcies. Early disasters such as these encouraged prudence. "Sienese bankers learned their lesson," Ugo Fatini, who is a member of Il Monte's international department, tells me. "They made loans to English kings and did not get paid. So at Il Monte, we've practically never financed monumental sovereign risk loans. Our current exposure to Latin American debt is only about $1 million to Brazil and about $1 million to Mexico. That's how we've survived."

The family merchant banks also suffered because successive generations were not always equally astute or committed. The Medici bank went under partly because Lorenzo the Magnificent, the fourth family member to head the bank, had little training in and little time for banking. He preferred playing papal politics and patronizing the arts, so that the family bank scarcely outlived him. The Medici found themselves expelled from the city of Florence and all their land sequestered. Several more of the 33 *banchi grossi* in Florence, which had been the financial capital of Europe

Gem of bank's collection is Sassetta's dazzling work *Adoration of the Magi*, a companion piece to *The Journey of the Magi*, owned by the Metropolitan in New York. Il Monte doesn't put values on its paintings, but experts suggest *The Adoration* might auction for more than $10 million.

for more than two centuries, crashed with the Medici.

While the famous banking families operated chiefly for a handful of princely clients (there being no great industrial clients as we know them today), more mundane daily commerce was oiled by the banking skills of the money changers, *banchi in mercato*. In Genoa the city authorities rented out space beneath a loggia in the aptly named Piazza Banchi; in Venice *banchi in mercato* had booths along the Rialto. And since much of their business success depended on the latest information, they all tended to congregate at certain times of day to glean gossip, just as bankers today hug their Reuters money-market screens. In Siena they seemed to have gathered in the Loggia della Mercanzia. Otherwise their needs were simple. "The moneychanger-banker or his factor could be found seated at his table, on top of which he kept a pouch for coins and an account book for entering deposits and transfers," according to Frederic Lane. "Pen and ink, an assay scale [for weighing coins] and some kind of abacus completed the necessities of the profession." Those ubiquitous Italian money changers traveled all over Europe assessing the value of gold and silver coins from the myriad mints of Italian city-states and other principalities (local rulers loved having their own mints because they could make a profit by making money).

These far-flung money changers were the true forefathers of your own local bank, taking deposits, transferring money from one client to another, settling business debts. But neither they nor the big international bankers offered another important service—small loans to a farmer wanting to build a new barn, or to a small-town trader awaiting payment for a consignment of grain. Of course, these poorer people had to borrow, but they could resort only to unofficial pawnbrokers, *banchi di pegni* or moneylenders in the Jewish community, who could ignore the constraints of canon law on usury, sometimes charging 40 percent or more interest per year. To improve the situation, the order of Franciscan Friars Minor in Italy sought papal approval to start public nonprofit loan banks, known as *monti di pietà* (banks that took "pity" on the needy). Such banks offered small loans against collateral (usually jewelry) and charged only working expenses of 5 percent. "Fighting fire with fire," as one historian put it, "the Franciscans proposed to eliminate usury . . . with moderate interest."

The first *monte di pietà* opened in Perugia in 1467, with the approval of the pope. Many others initiated by the Franciscans soon opened, and over the next couple of centuries this banking model was often copied elsewhere in Europe. That's how Il Monte dei Paschi began, too, though with one crucial distinction: it was founded not by the Franciscans but by the city of Siena. On March 4, 1472, the General Council of the Commune of Siena, then an independent republic,

" considering how great honor and praise is attributed to those republics that see to poor or wretched or needy persons being aided and assisted in their wants and needs," decided that a bank for such common folk be set up in Siena. The city, not the church, secured Il Monte's initial capital with a loan of 5,000 gold florins from taxes levied on wine, vegetables, salt, meat and fish. Papal indulgences were sought by the commune for those who helped the project financially. Recipients of loans from this new bank were charged modest interest to cover operating costs.

To celebrate the creation of this public credit institution, Il Monte's governors commissioned local artist Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta to paint *Our Lady of Mercy*, in which the people of Siena are shown gathered under the Virgin's mantle. The fresco still hangs in the president's office in the Palazzo Salimbeni, where the first clerks opened their ledgers more than 500 years ago.

From the start, business was brisk. More than 7,000 loans, most of them for a few florins, were granted in the financial year 1483-84. To begin with, collateral against loans was chiefly jewelry or clothing, so the bank was essentially an official, city-owned pawnbroker. For a typical day the ledgers show such pledges as "six little earrings in gold," "a black velvet doublet," "an agate set in gold," "a red garnet set in gold" and "two black Spanish-style cloaks." Only later was land offered as security. Loans were usually for four or five months, sometimes longer, at an interest rate of about 7 percent a year.

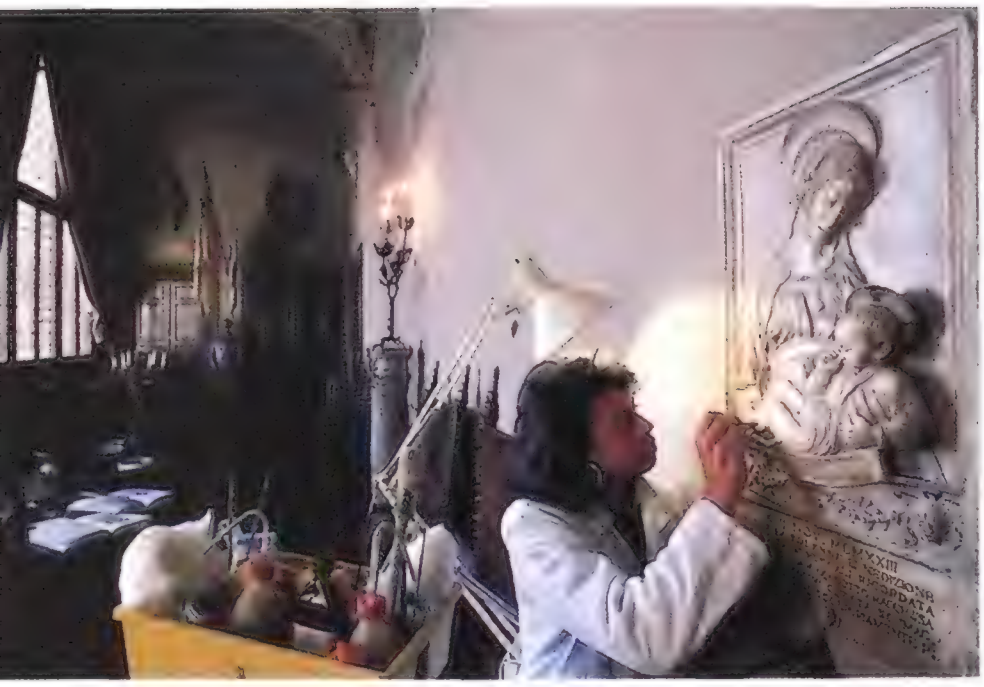
Lending to a legion of farmers

Often loans were to tide farmers over until the harvest or to help them buy a flock of sheep, plant vines or build a barn. From its earliest days this was a banking business devoted to the needs of an agricultural region. That is one secret of the bank's longevity. As the bank's archivist, Roberto Rocchigiani, a thoughtful figure in a green velvet jacket, explains to me, "In this agricultural area one harvest might be better than another, but otherwise there was not much risk." Thus, Il Monte escaped the economic crises that could sweep aside a bank in a major city, a bank whose money was tied up with risk-taking entrepreneurs in commerce and industry. For 500 years, until World War II, life in the Tuscan countryside did not change greatly. The bank's clientele was a legion of farmers.

The agricultural bond was acknowledged in the bank's own name in 1624 when it was reorganized as *Il Monte non vacabile de' Paschi della Città e Stato di Siena*. The *paschi* were the public pasturelands around the city, income from which provided a cornerstone of the bank's capital, as tenant farmers got loans to improve their livestock. For instance, the bank made a loan of 40 scudi to a local farmer named Scipione Turamini, who had rented part of the public pasture "entrusting therein" 80 sows. (A scudo was a valuable silver or gold coin that could buy dinner for a dozen people in the 15th century.) Another loan of 50 scudi was authorized "to make a new granary at Torrenieri."

Loans such as these were often made without any pledged collateral, so Il Monte dei Paschi is also an ancestor of the land credit bank. In addition, to encourage business the grand duke of Tuscany agreed to issue a state guarantee on all investments. Il Monte was also assigned the task of collecting 5 percent of the value of wheat held by bakers for the Abbondanza, the Siena food authority. With such assured deposits, it was able to issue 5-percent bonds to the public in the total amount of 200,000 scudi—a substantial sum in those days. The profits thus earned were distributed every five years; half went to the destitute and the convents

Bank's *Madonna and Child* by Giovanni di Paolo was part of multipaneled church decoration in the 1430s.



In the Palazzo Chigi-Saracini, restorer Paola Rosa polishes a 15th-century marble Madonna and Child.

of nuns in the city, the other half to the peasant poor. Thus the original charitable concept of the *monte di pietà* was preserved, building the present tradition of Il Monte dei Paschi as the city's great and lasting benefactor.

Il Monte enjoyed considerable authority. For 200 years, starting in the late 16th century, it actually had penal jurisdiction over both customers and employees in a number of civil and criminal cases. The bank's board had the power to send people to jail or even impose the death penalty "not only over servants of Il Monte but also over any person who in his dealings with Il Monte shall contravene the orders and commands of the Board and Chairman; as also against any person who practices fraud or deception to the detriment of the same."

Such amazing powers were occasionally needed. A cashier named Armenio Melari absconded on December 29, 1626, having gradually falsified the account ledgers to the tune of 40,277 scudi. "That's like running off with a *miliardo* [a billion lire or roughly the equivalent of $800,000] today," reflects archivist Rocchigiani, bending low over ancient records to confirm the scandal. The bank pursued Melari, but he took refuge in a monastery. What happened then? I wonder. Did the bank use its authority to exert the supreme penalty? No, concluded Rocchigiani after further study of the case. "Melari's family agreed to make gradual repayment."

The bank's officers, who wielded these penal powers until the late 18th century, came from the powerful families of Siena. The magistrature of the bank, akin to the board of directors today, was composed of eight members of the nobility, while the daily business was watched over by the *provveditore* (literally, the "provider"), or CEO, whose title survives to this day. Each successive *provveditore* came from a different family, thus avoiding the hazard in many family banks, like that of the Medici in Florence, of being destroyed by kinsmen who were not up to the job. In each generation the bank benefited from an injection of fresh talent. As Ugo Fatini explains, "The noble families sent their best brain into the bank."

Experienced managers also protected Il Monte's unique independence as the city of Siena's own bank. Though Italian politicians have long eyed its profits, the bank has always fought back. "The Sienese do not want to see their golden nest egg disappear into the hungry mouth of the rest of Italy," a bank officer says. "The cry has always been *lasciate Il Monte com è*—leave Il Monte as it is."

In the 1930s, when he was Italy's dictator, Benito Mussolini wanted to move the bank to Rome but came up against Alfredo Bruchi, a formidable *provveditore*. Bruchi ran Il Monte from 1917 until 1944, first as *provveditore* and later as *presidente* (chairman of the board), occasionally doubling as both. Although a Fascist himself, he rebuffed Mussolini's Minister of Finance by devising a deal through which the city of Siena and the province of Siena always kept a voting majority on the board. Today, Siena still has five directors out of eight on the board.

Giving away half the profits

One key task of that board still is deciding how to share out the bank's profits. Half the net profits are automatically allocated to the reserve, while up to half may be devoted to the benefit of the local economy. That phrase "up to" is important. Il Monte dei Paschi is a conservative bank, not given to financing risky operations. It has sought to build an impregnable reserve fund so that it never has to go hat in hand to the city or government, a fate that has befallen other, less prudently managed, Italian banks. In actual practice the bank's allocation for good works often is not half the profits; more than half is wisely allocated to reserves. For 1989, for instance, of the bank's total profits of $222.2 million, just 25 percent was assigned to donations and public works.

Besides this treasure chest, Il Monte's roots in the soil have undoubtedly contributed to its longevity and still underpin its independence. "Other banks often had only three or four major customers," an official explains, "so if one collapsed, so did the bank. But we've always had lots of little landholders and small industries." If a farmer went bust, Il Monte actually benefited because it got his land. Indeed, one of the bank's prime assets was the land it acquired through default.

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"Noble families lived beyond their means—too many horses, too many women, too many card games," confides archivist Rocchigiani. "They pledged their land and buildings to the bank for loans, and eventually the bank got them." One noble Sienese family that traces its ancestry back to the 12th century and owned vast tracts of land gradually lost all its estates as the bank called in loans. Finally, nothing was left for the next heir apparent to the noble title; Il Monte considerately offered him a job as a clerk.

The estates of Fontanafredda in the Piedmont region, which make the celebrated rich, heavy Barolo wines, also came to Il Monte by default in 1931. The bank has revived the vineyard's fortunes by putting one of the managers of its international department in charge. "He applied everything he had learned in banking to selling the wines," says a bank officer, "and he's found an entirely new market for our high-quality wines in Japan."

Assets, however, are not acquired just by default. Il Monte regards itself as a patron of Siena's cultural and artistic heritage. Over the centuries Sienese artists have been commissioned to commemorate major events in the bank's own history, and the bank has shrewdly purchased a remarkable collection of Sienese paintings. Explains Donatella Capresi, Il Monte's curator, "We now have over 100 paintings and sculptures, forming the most important private collection of the Sienese school." Among the finest: the Sassetta *Saint Anthony Abbot*, commissioned in 1423 for the Woolworkers Guild Chapel in Siena, and a Giovanni di Paolo *Madonna and Child* (p. 63).

Capresi keeps an eye on Italian auctions and antique fairs for unknown Sienese masterpieces that turn up from time to time in other private collections. Usually she manages to track down two or three paintings each year. Afterward, the bank's acquisitions committee decides whether to buy them or not. "We're trying to keep together the patrimony of the Siena school," she says. "There's still a lot around in Italy, and we've got some gaps in our collection. For the 14th century, for instance, we've got only one Pietro Lorenzetti."

The collection is housed in galleries in the basement of the Palazzo Salimbeni and may be viewed only by invitation. To walk round it is to be confronted with the religious and social history of Siena. One gallery is devoted to the annual Palio, showing the Campo in carnival mood through the centuries. One of the paintings, by 16th-century artist Vincenzo Rustici, depicts a spectacular contest in which young men tried to eat a meal from a table laden with food, while being threatened by a bull (pp. 68-69). They had to keep one hand on the table, while wielding a sword in the other to keep the bull at bay. The one who finished the meal won the prize of ten gold coins.

Worldly masterpiece, Bernardino Mei's *The Charlatan* shows a huckster working a crowd in the Campo.

"Come back for the Palio"

The Palio, incidentally, which is held in early July and again in mid-August each year, is not a conventional horse race, but rather a battle between rival *contrade* (districts), to see, by hook or crook, whose horse can win. All the energy and guile of each *contrada* goes into making sure of victory. If that means bribing jockeys or rival *contrade* to lose, or encouraging your own jockey to whip his fellows and their horses, so be it. "Come back for the Palio," says Roberto Perozzi, a junior officer in Il Monte's international division, "and I'll take you out for four days with my *contrada* to see what really happens." The Palio, it seems, is won or lost in the prerace intrigue. Il Monte's officials, being true citizens of Siena, take time off from trading money for a little behind-the-scenes horse trading.

Besides guarding its own art collection, the bank also watches over the Chigi-Saracini Collection, which

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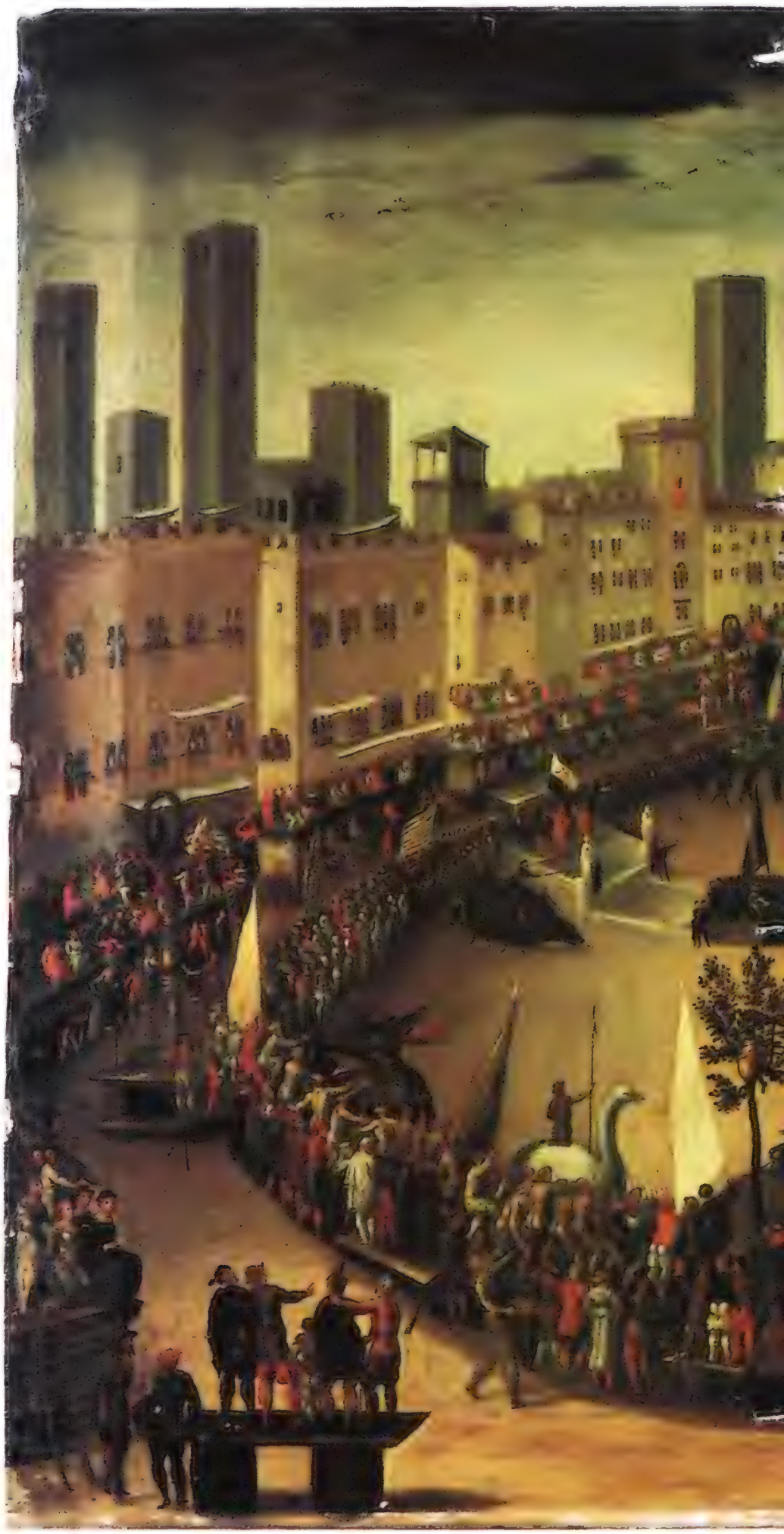
the Chigi family conveyed to Il Monte in 1966 on condition that it keep the 3,000 paintings, sculptures and drawings intact in the 12th-century Palazzo Chigi-Saracini. Among its treasures, the palace has the radiant *Madonna and Child and Two Angels* by Sandro Botticelli and some of the finest works of Sassetta, the name used by Stefano di Giovanni, one of Siena's great masters of the early 15th century. The palace also has its own concert hall (built 70 years ago by Count Guido Chigi-Saracini to indulge his passion for music), which today houses the Accademia Musicale Chigiana. The academy, also underwritten by Il Monte dei Paschi, hosts an annual summer school for more than 600 music students, many from American music colleges.

A glimpse of these collections was provided for the first time in 85 years in New York in 1988-89 as part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition of 15th-century Sienese painters, which Il Monte sponsored. Among the works loaned from the bank was Sassetta's incomparable *Adoration of the Magi* (p. 62).

Il Monte dei Paschi's sponsorship of the exhibition was part of a recent decision by the bank to introduce itself to a wider world. Although Il Monte is no stranger to the international banking community—it has had relations with the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company since the beginning of this century—the bank has always been discreet in its operations. "I believe in a low profile and strong profits," says Ugo Fatini. Modern international banking, however, sometimes calls for a little showmanship, and a few years ago the bank opened an office on the 26th floor of a Park Avenue skyscraper. There bank officials finance Italy's exports to the United States, including smart shoes and designer clothes, as well as goods from the Tuscan countryside—Barolo wines from the Fontanafredda estates, gold chains from Arezzo (the center of Italian jewelry, just down the road from Siena). The bank's high-level clientele includes Time Warner Inc. and Fortune 500 companies such as the Mobil Oil Corporation.

As Il Monte plays a larger role on the world banking stage, one question inevitably arises. Can a major



In 16th century, mock bullfights and other zany doings served as preliminaries to Siena's celebrated Palio.

international banking group without shareholders remain within the domain of a small Italian city? In order to grow and compete, will the bank have to yield its unique relationship with Siena and seek outside shareholders? Politicians in Rome are once again eyeing the bank. Il Monte's instinctive reaction is to resist, digging itself in behind the walls of its formidable reserves. The issue came up recently in local elections. One candidate for the city council dared to voice the thought that the bank should become a public company accountable to outside shareholders. The proposal met with a firm chorus of noes, not least from several candidates for the office of mayor, one of whom became the current vice chairman of Il Monte. "One doesn't touch the bank" was still the cry.

How does Ugo Fatini feel about the challenge? "Il Monte dei Paschi has overcome many, many battles in 500 years," he says bluntly. "We can survive."

It's time for a change to Gallo.

© E. & J. Gallo Winery, Modesto, CA.

By Charlotte Evans

Time was when the Wild West danced to the 'devil's rope'

Barbed wire, the cruel device that split the Great Plains and started range wars, now separates collectors from their cash

Near La Crosse, Kansas, and its barbed wire museum, wire is strung on limestone posts rather than wood.

Six old wire styles include Upham's "Snail Barb" (second from bottom) and (top) Crandal's "Zigzag."

"I know only one barbed wire joke," said Jim Costigan, chairman of the Department of Communications at Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas. "It's about the barbed wire bikini."

Giggles rippled through the audience at the awards banquet as the speaker paused before delivering the punch line.

"It protects the property," he said, "but doesn't obscure the view."

They loved it. But then, these are people who take their wire seriously. They have turned up by the hundreds for the 24th annual Barbed Wire Festival, a swap and sale in La Crosse, Kansas. It is early May and they are here to buy, sell, swap, gossip, assess the competition and maybe exaggerate a little. Also to crowd a grassy field outside the Rush County Historical Society at the groundbreaking ceremony for a 5,400-square-foot prefabricated structure, the new Kansas Barbed Wire Collectors Association Museum. And in case anybody thinks that barbed wire is merely barbed wire, copies of a serious pamphlet entitled *Early U.S. Barbed Wire Patents*, identifying 622 different kinds of wire "made up of 401 patents and 221 modifications thereof," can be had for $100 each.

Photographs by H. Brooks Walker

The old Barbed Wire Museum, devoted to the lure and lore of what some folks, cattlemen mostly, refer to as "devil's rope," had come to seem downright cramped. Besides, with new barbed wire museums in Walsenburg, Colorado, and McLean, Texas, civic leaders of La Crosse figured it was time to show the flag. For them devil's rope is no joke. Barbed wire, they will tell you, literally changed the face and economy of America's Great Plains, its tiny, linked spikes like millions of stitches quilting a vast muslin landscape.

To be sure, it took a while to convince ranchers that lowly barbed wire was a worthy corral for agitated longhorns. But once that was done, barbed wire swept across the plains like wildfire in a high wind, eliminating free-range grazing grounds and providing cattlemen with wealth and a new way of life. In the mid-1880s wire worked a bit too well. It trapped and froze thousands of animals trying to escape ferocious blizzards, a tragedy that threatened to extinguish the barbed wire boom in its infancy.

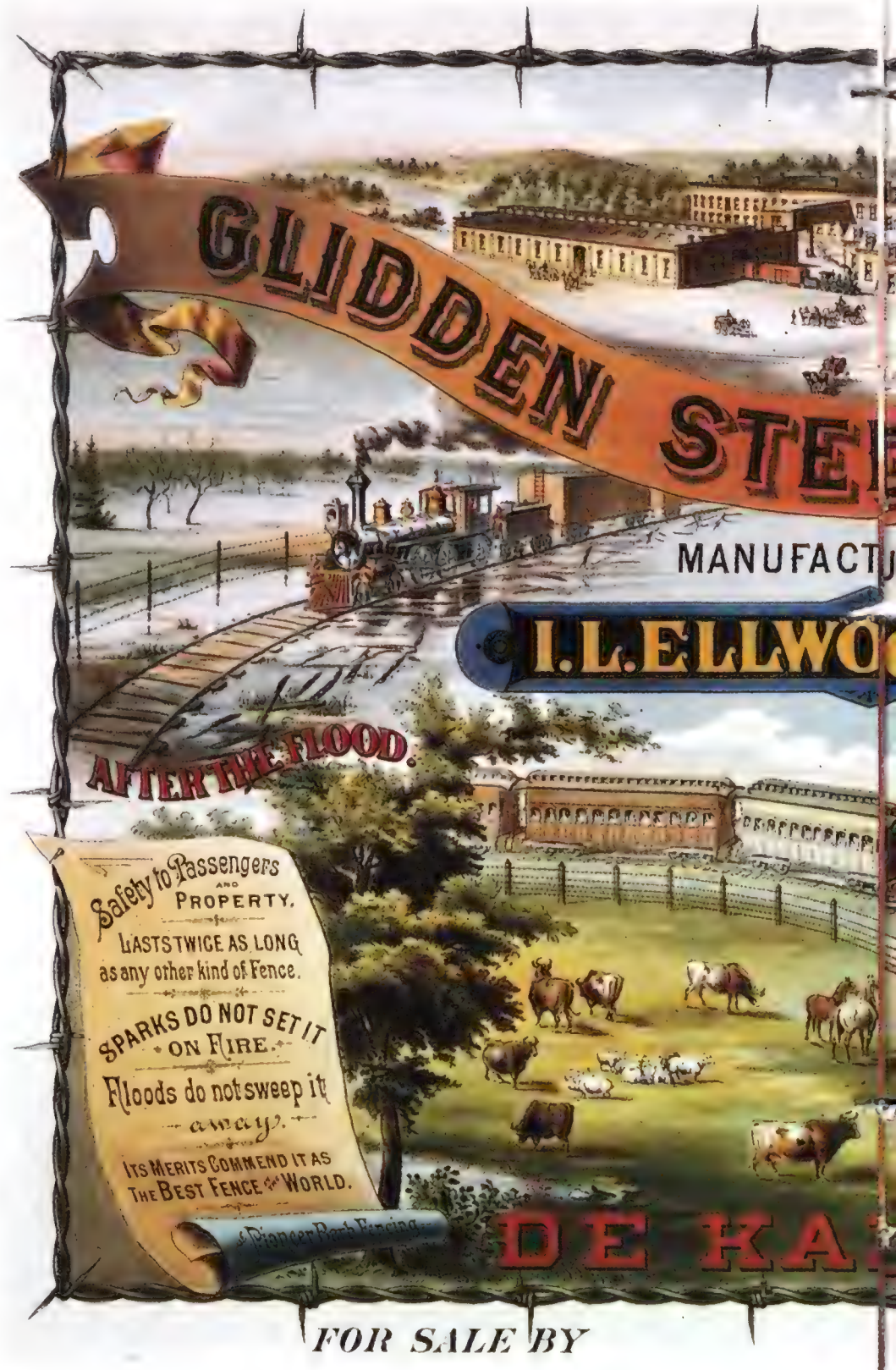
"Just as important as the '49 gold rush"

Wire kindled passion and greed, stirred up fence wars, and sparked debate on the very nature of land and how to use it. During World War I, clutching and shredding human flesh on the Western Front, barbed wire became the hated emblem of trench warfare. Wire enthusiasts also credit the stuff with inspiring the development of the tank.

Barbed wire fans, it seems, still have a chip on their shoulder about it all. "We learn in grade school who invented the light bulb, the steam engine and the airplane," says Ivan Krug, a La Crosse lawyer who helped establish the Barbed Wire Museum in 1970. "Barbed wire was probably more important to the development of this country than any of the above. It is just as important as the '49 gold rush—yet no one gives it any respect. By 1927, when Ford ceased production of the Model T, barbed wire had done more for our country than most other inventions. Yet Ford gets the big billing."

La Crosse (pop. 1,200) is 160 miles northwest of Wichita, about a three-hour drive through undulating wheatfields. It is not the only American town with a dedication to prickly fencing. It is not even the birthplace of barbed wire—that honor goes to De Kalb, Illinois, where the Ellwood House Museum, home of one of the first makers of barbed wire, presents exhibits on the development of the wire and its effects on the West; the De Kalb high school sports teams are called "the Barbs." But, fueled by civic pride and devotion to regional history, La Crosse has become the self-appointed "Barbed Wire Capital of the World."

America really began to need barbed wire after the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Early ad for Glidden Steel Barbed Wire shows the Ellwood plant in De Kalb, Illinois, with product hard at work, undisturbed by fire or flood, and keeping cows safely separated from railroad tracks.

Masked men on a wire-cutting raid were photographed in Nebraska at height of range wars in 1880s. Rival cattlemen and farmers regularly cut one another's wire—or hired other people to do it.

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The BEST is cheapest and the GLIDDEN IS GUARANTEED WITHOUT AN EQUAL
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Civil War. With a little help from the California gold rush, the West was being settled. The year 1862 had seen passage of the Homestead Act and the Pacific Railway Act. The first virtually gave 160 acres to pioneering spirits willing to settle on the plains. The second led to the construction of a transcontinental railroad. When the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific met at Promontory Point, Utah, in May of 1869, a crying need for barbed wire was not far behind.

Western land was vast, bleak and intimidating. "Mile upon mile, and not a tree, a bird, or a river," Robert Louis Stevenson wrote of a train trip between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Ogden, Utah, in 1879. There wasn't half enough timber or rocks for fencing. The rush of settlers experimented with all sorts of hedges, from honey locust to pyracantha, mesquite, cactus, briar and Osage orange, but these took years to grow and once established could not be moved.

Galvanized wire was quick to install, portable and cheaper than wood. Unhappily, "it snapped in cold and sagged in heat," as one manufacturer reported. Besides, cattle "easily broke through [it] or contentedly sawed their itching necks on the smooth wire."

The story of barbed wire's checkered past is best told in *The Wire That Fenced the West*, written by a Texas couple, Henry and Frances McCallum. Though the American need for fencing was great, the McCallums tell us, it was French ingenuity that produced the first patents. In 1860 Leonce Eugene Grassin-Baledans patented the first use of twisted strands of sheet metal as a "fence and tree protector." An illustration Grassin-Baledans submitted with the application shows a strand of twisted sheet metal with projecting points.

The first U.S. patent for barbed fencing (actually a fence attachment) went to Alphonso Dabb of Elizabethport, New Jersey, on April 2, 1867. Later that year Lucien Smith of Kent, Ohio, and William Hunt of Scott, New York, received patents for single-stranded wire fitted with barbs. First to twist two wires together to form a barbed cable was Michael Kelly of New York City, whose patent was granted in 1868.

Twisting proved the crucial development, but Kelly's patent failed to stress one great advantage that it offered, namely, a technique for twisting barbs in place between two wires, to keep them from sliding along the wire. Joseph Farwell Glidden, a De Kalb farmer, did not make Kelly's mistake. The Glidden double-stranded model was patented in 1874, and much was made of the fact that the barbs were held in place by the twisted wire. Christened "The Winner," it became the most successful barbed wire in the country.

The author, who has worked for the New York Times, *is used to barbed comment. A Connecticut native, she has reported from New Zealand and Antarctica.*

Grim-looking gauntlet used for stringing barbed wire is made by riveting leather plates onto a glove.

That same year, also in De Kalb, Jacob Haish, who owned a lumberyard, and hardware store owner Isaac Leonard Ellwood experimented with their own versions of barbed wire. Glidden, Haish and Ellwood each filed for a patent on his invention. Haish soon began manufacturing on his own. Glidden and Ellwood combined forces in the Barb Fence Company, buying plain wire, attaching barbs and selling the stuff in Ellwood's store. According to the McCallums, there was a windmill tower across the street from the building where the wire was made. Ellwood and Glidden would send a boy up the tower with a bucket of barbs and have him slide them down a greased wire. "The twisting was then done inside the building."

By 1876 the Washburn & Moen Manufacturing Company in Massachusetts was sending a lot of its plain wire to De Kalb. It also sent vice president Charles Washburn to see what was being done with it. Shortly afterward, Washburn bought Glidden out. The price was $60,000, plus a royalty of 25 cents for every 100 pounds of barbed wire that Washburn and Ellwood made in their new company. Several complex transactions later, that company became part of United States Steel.

The big new market that barbed wire had to conquer was Texas, a state whose denizens tended to take a dim view of any innovation from the North. They also suffered from a territorial aversion to fencing in general. "Don't fence me in" was a Texan rallying cry generations before it became a song.

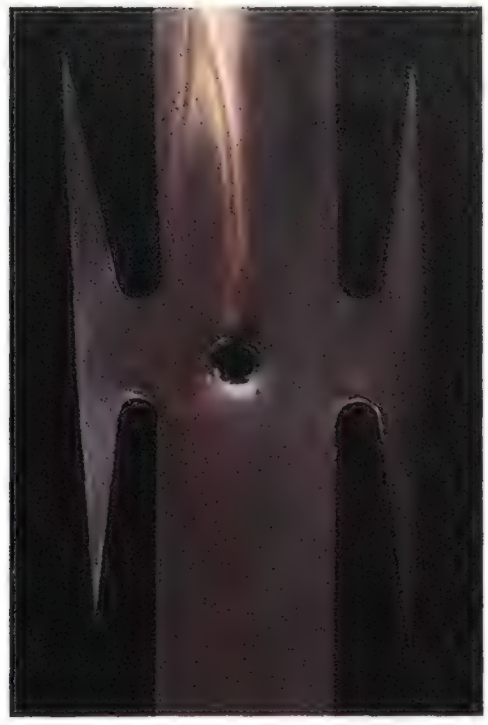
"Ain't a cowhand livin' won't go for that"

The man who finally sold Texas on barbed wire was John Warne Gates, who had been hired by Ellwood to do just that. As the story goes, Gates arrived in San Antonio in 1876, just 21 years old. An affable youth, he duly made friends with farmers and cattlemen but found few buyers. At least until opportunity knocked in the form of Ol' Jim, a local bull who, it was said, "could go through anything."

Young Gates got his idea while eating dinner in a chili parlor. The diners were being diverted from their food by a medicine-show performer named "Doc" Lighthall, who was demonstrating his favorite nostrums in the plaza outside the restaurant. Suddenly a light bulb went on in Gates' head. "We'll do like Doc Lighthall," he is said to have exclaimed. "Get the wildest damn cattle in Texas—corral 'em here with barbed wire and then let 'em try to get out. Ain't a cowhand livin' won't go for that."

Gates got permission from city officials to put up his corral, and built suspense by refusing to tell onlookers what the corral was for until just before it was finished. By then he had polished his pitch.

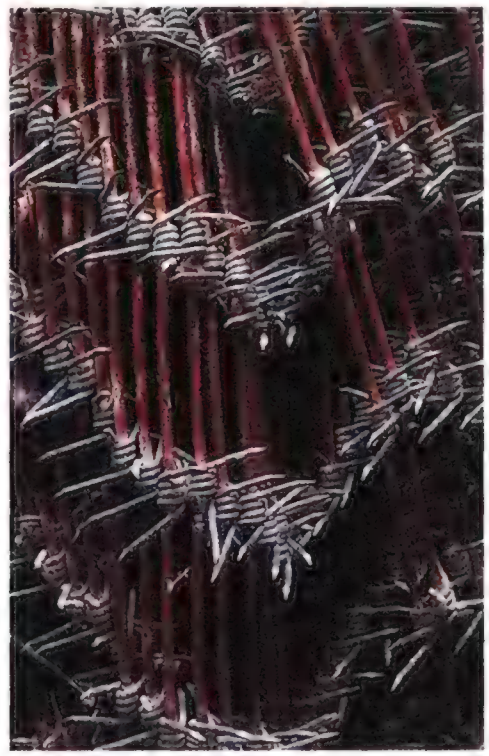
Line repairman's hammer, fitted with a pick and slots, hung from a saddle horn.



Recent "entanglement" wire penned people in Vietnam.

End-line ratchet was built into fence to take up slack in wire.

Punishing Dodge "Star" wire, patented in 1881, is most sought after by collectors.



High-tensile wire has been used in war since the 1940s.

Drill-like device made sagging fence wire tight by twisting.

"This is the finest fence in the world," he boasted. "Light as air. Stronger than whiskey. Cheaper than dirt. All steel, and miles long. The cattle ain't born that can get through it. Bring on your steers, gentlemen!"

Wary spectators kept their distance from the eight-strand barrier as Gates had the animals driven in. No one believed the wire would hold. Then the battle raged: tightly strung wire versus hooved tonnage spooked by flaming torches. The animals charged and retreated, then charged again. The wire resisted every onslaught, and in time the beasts gave up. Apart from a loosened post, Gates' fence had held.

With Texans buying, U.S. barbed wire sales boomed. In one year, 1875, the number of pounds sold nationwide jumped from 600,000 to 2,840,000. By 1880 the total had reached 80,500,000. As sales rose, prices dropped. In 1874 barbed wire cost $20 per hundredweight. By 1880 the price had slid to $10. By 1897 the stuff was going for a low of $1.80 per hundredweight.

Right off, Gates insisted that he be made a partner in the company or be given the exclusive right to sell in Texas. Ellwood refused. Gates promptly set up a renegade operation in St. Louis. Ellwood got an injunction, but Gates put his whole operation onto a barge and moved it across the wide Missouri to Illinois. By the time Ellwood's lawyers had caught up with him there, Gates had barged back to Missouri.

For nearly two decades barbed wire litigation provided a feast for lawyers. Haish disputed Glidden's patent, and suits between Haish, Ellwood and Wash-

Linda Humphrey bears down in the wire-splicing contest.

Collectors match their wares at La Crosse, Kansas, swap and sale.

burn & Moen went on for years. Eventually, the Beat 'Em All Barbed Wire Company filed charges against the Glidden patent, and the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court in 1892. The Justices found in favor of Glidden who, they said, "first published this device; put it on record; made use of it to the public."

"There is something primitive about the name 'barbed wire,'" historian Walter Prescott Webb once wrote, "something suggestive of savagery and lack of refinement, something harmonious with the relentless hardness of the Plains." By the early 1880s the Southwest was overrun by millions of cattle. Long "drift fences" sliced across the Texas panhandle; their purpose was to keep the herds from drifting down from the North into Texas. The winters of 1885-86 and 1886-87 struck with killing cold, and thousands of cattle, moving South to escape the storms, found themselves trapped against the wire.

Quoting historian Lewis Nordyke, *The Wire That Fenced the West* describes the result: "They moved 'like grey ghosts [with] icicles hanging from their muzzles, eyes and ears,' . . . and directly into the fences. There they were stalled; they could not go forward, and they would not go back. They stood stacked together against the wire, without food, water, warmth or shelter. They pressed close against each other in groups all along the fence line, and sometimes they gathered in bunches reaching as much as four hundred yards back from the fence. Still there was not enough warmth in their huddled forms to counteract the cold, and within a short time they either smothered or froze in their tracks."

"There are big mounds of cattle, nothing visible but horns," the foreman of the Swan Land and Cattle Company reported in the winter of 1886-87. "The snow had drifted over them and you are spared meantime the horrible sight of seeing piles of carcasses."

Losses to herds ran as high as 75 percent. Since a prime steer weighed from 700 to 850 pounds and might sell for 6 to 8 cents a pound, the losses amounted to financial disaster. The deaths added force to ongoing arguments that, in any case, barbed wire fencing was inhumane, even in summer. In warm weather, screwworms were drawn to open wounds cut by the barbs, sometimes producing fatal infestation. Some states actually began outlawing the use of barbed wire. But soon wire sales began to boom again.

The spread of barbed wire also led to fence cutting and land grabbing. The traditional confrontation was between ranchers who needed vast ranges for their cattle, and farmers who needed fences to keep the hurtful herds out of their cornfields, as in the film classic *Shane*. But simple land grabbing was far more widespread. When it came to staking out territory, cattlemen, determined to own and fence grazing land, tended to fence any and all land they owned, land they intended to own and land they were accustomed to using. They also fenced thousands of acres owned by the public. Retaliatory fence cutting flared up, started by small ranchers and farmers who had been fenced in by the big operations.

Rustlers got into the act, claiming friendship with the "little man," but really out for the cattle they could steal through cut fence. Cutting escalated until any fence was fair game, and in some places a virtual state of open warfare existed. Bands of cutters threatened fencers if they tried to rebuild their enclosures. One account reports that a rancher "found a coffin

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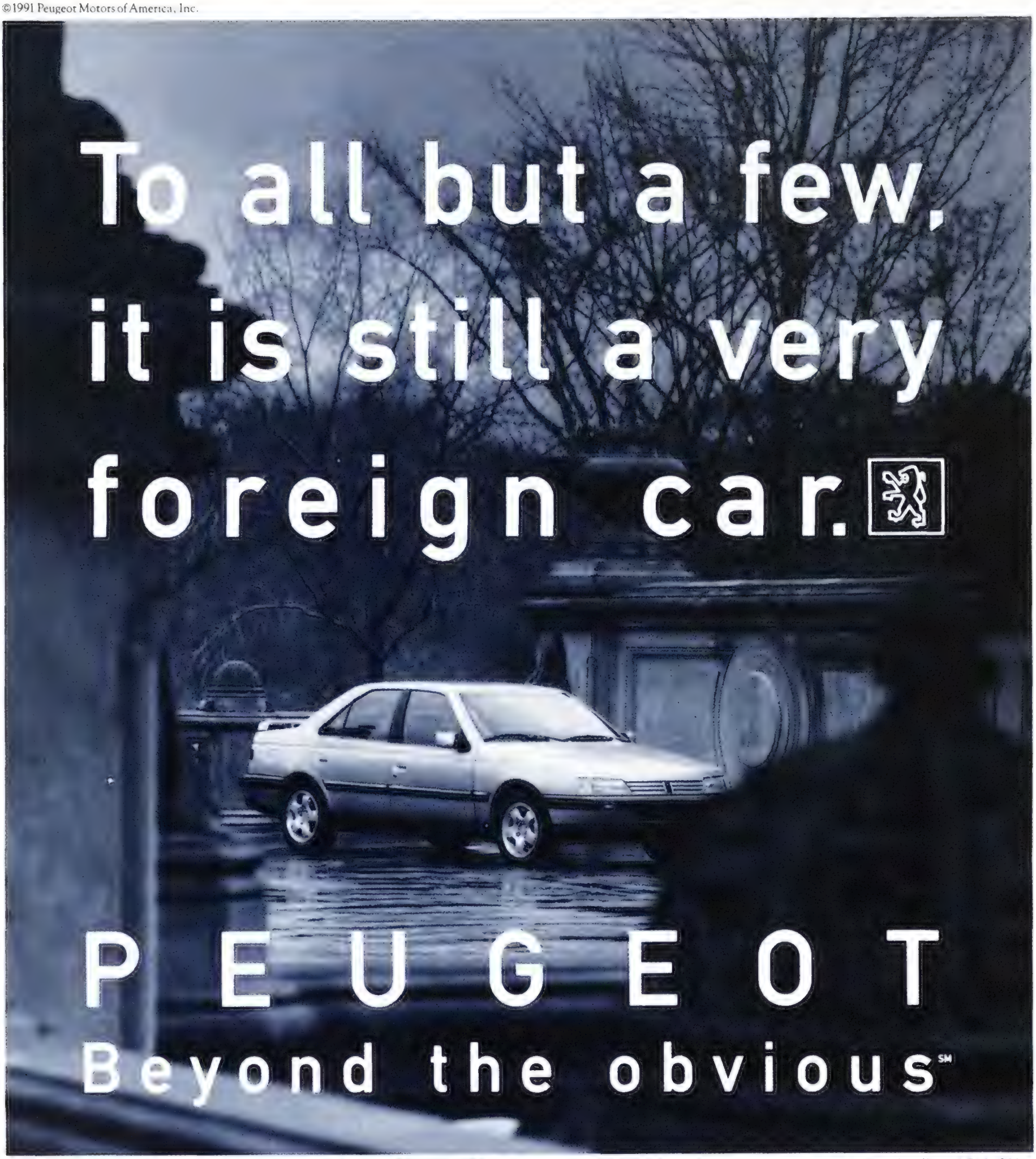

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Rosie Dalton's boot plaque lists notable wires of the 1800s. Earliest is Michael Kelly's "Diamond," from 1868.

on his porch, with the words: 'This will be your end if you keep fencing.'" Few deaths were officially recorded but many occurred while the vicious and personal feuding lasted.

The most violent outbreaks took place not in Texas, but in Lincoln County, New Mexico, and later in Johnson County, Wyoming, where the fighting and feuding ultimately had to be put down by a squadron of U.S. Cavalry.

To fence or not to fence? That was the question. And the classic contestants, poor sodbusting farmers and hard-riding ranchers, still live on in American legend. Rodgers and Hammerstein had fun with the rivalry in *Oklahoma!* when a song and dance, "The Farmer and the Cowman (Should be Friends)," turns into a riot. Range-war movies almost without number have reached the silver screen. Not only *Shane* (1953) but also *The Range Feud* (1931), *Range Defenders* (1937), *The Range Busters* (1940), *Range Justice* (1948) and *Range Land* (1949), as well as two versions of *Range Law* (1931, 1944).

Eventually public sympathy turned against fence cutting. In 1884 the Texas Legislature even made it a crime, appropriating $50,000 "for the enforcement of the emergency acts covering 'the wanton and willful cutting' of fencing." The wars simmered down.

Meanwhile the U.S. barbed wire industry had begun to branch out into new markets, military ones. The Boers had used barbed wire around prison compounds in South Africa during the war with England of 1899-1902. During World War I, American manufacturers took the lead in turning out wire for use on the Western Front. Miles were strung across the muddy, shell-torn fields of France. Indeed, the British developed the tank in 1915 largely in a desperate attempt to help the infantry smash through German wire and bring the stalemated war to a close.

World War II had little trench warfare. But like the cockroach, barbed wire kept adapting to new challenges. In an effort to entangle enemy submarines trying to enter their harbors while submerged, the Japanese sank carloads of barbed wire into the sea. The U.S. Navy countered with frogmen—in a sense, another barbed wire byproduct. After the Korean War huge rolls of concertina wire—single-stranded spirals that would spring back into place after a tank rolled over them—were set up by United Nations forces along defensive perimeters that marked the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

But in 1950, just as the Korean War started, European manufacturers had begun offering wire for sale in the United States at prices below domestic levels. Imports rose. By 1958 (scandal!) almost 50 percent of the wire used here was imported. Today this country buys far more barbed wire abroad than it sells there: in 1990 we imported 15,350 net tons, exporting 2,715. Our major suppliers are Brazil, from which we imported 7,681 tons, Mexico, 3,042 tons, and Poland, 1,219 tons.

"The sad part," says Bobby Ransdell, past president of the International Fence Industry Association, with headquarters outside Atlanta, "is that foreign quality is sometimes superior to our own."

They don't use wire like they used to

Simply because of the great open spaces, North America—the United States in particular—is still the world's number one consumer. But our demand for barbed wire is slowly declining. Agriculture accounts for 90 percent of the barbed wire sold, and farmers and ranchers have found cheaper or more effective alternatives in electric, woven and field fencing. Which means that, more and more, barbed wire will become a collector's item.

Woodson Owen of Garden City, Kansas, has collected about 400 kinds of it. A former blacksmith's assistant, road contractor, farmer and auto mechanic, Owen took a sample to La Crosse but, according to his wife, Dorothy, left the best at home. "A lot of the barbed wire these guys love so much, they just keep it," she explains. Just the same, in the La Crosse audito-

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rium, 18-inch lengths of barbed wire (the standard size for collectors) are laid out like sheaves of wheat, taped to rulers or plain pieces of wood. There are pointy prongs, to be sure, but also spurs, buckles, stars, leaves and even Calderesque spirals.

Owen is 86. He started collecting in 1918 after a cousin, back from the war, handed him some German entanglement wire, saying, "This is what we had to get through." Owen didn't do anything official about it, though, until La Crosse organized a collectors' association in 1967. "I came up here and I'm a charter member," he says. "No. 29."

Charlie Dalton, a retired discount-store manager from Lewisville, Texas, started collecting coins, then switched to barbed wire. He and his wife, Rosie, who call themselves the Dalton Gang, for eight years have been publishing the magazine *Barbed Wire Collector.* With a circulation of "under 1,000" and six issues a year, it offers a price guide, historical tidbits, excerpts from newsletters of barbed wire associations around the country and a feature—"Prickly Pairs"—on couples who collect.

Dalton, 50, recalls the dark days before barbed wire enlightenment struck him. He was helping his father put in a fence—using a coffee can to clear out dirt, putting the post in and filling the hole with rocks and dirt. "Back then," he says, appalled, "all I knew was it was a barbed wire fence." The thing Dalton enjoys most about barbed wire is that sometimes you can collect it "in its natural state, right on the fence." He quickly points out that he always asks permission and replaces the fence with new wire. Most fence owners think this is a pretty good deal. The supply of old wire in its natural habitat has dwindled, however. "You don't find as much on the fence anymore," he says, "20 or 30 kinds at most. So you've really got to go to the shows and start trading by mail."

Today the price of an 18-inch length of wire ranges from 25 cents to $300, but few sell for more than $100 to $200. Prices of the more expensive wires have been going down of late, too. The main reason is supply and demand. Publicity can also affect prices. "Somebody finds a piece of wire he's never seen before and thinks it's unique," says Dalton. "For a while it commands a high price. Then word gets around. The *Wall Street Journal* runs an article on barbed wire—and the same wire we thought was so rare, they start finding it all over the country."

Val Ferrin, a 68-year-old Chicagoan, admits to spending $2,000 to $3,000 at a show. He traces his fondness for barbed wire to the summer he was 15, when he worked for rancher H. O. Chalfant in Bucklin, Kansas. "I had to put up a quarter section of fence [enclosing 160 acres] all by myself," he said. "It took me the whole summer." When he went back in 1971 and found it had all been taken down he was shattered: "I've felt bad ever since."

"Whiskey Bill" Wiske, who is from Medicine Lodge,

Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth

The Fall of the Cowboy, done by Frederic Remington in 1895, conveys sadness that the old, free-ranging way of life (thanks partly to wire) has come to an end.

Kansas, has been stringing barbed wire for decades. Today, he reports, some people prefer an electric fence. It's just one strand, cheap and quick to put up. But, he says, "You have to check it every morning for breaks. Barbed wire does not have to be checked, except once a year. It'll stay up unless a semi runs into it."

A newly popular variation on the barbed wire theme is barbed tape, or razor wire, the wicked looping coils that now, like deadly extended Slinkys, top chain link fences around parking lots in New York City. Just as with barbed wire, many prospective buyers were at first put off by the looks and implications of razor wire when the modern version was first introduced commercially. "I was thrown out of a lot of offices between Phoenix and New York," says Will Boggs, vice president of American Security Fence, which manufactures razor wire. "But in New York they said, That looks like an interesting product."

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By Kenneth Baker

A nightmare of an exhibition that really happened

In 1937, the Nazis presented 650 artworks as entartete Kunst, *or 'degenerate art'; today, a new show throws light on those dark times*

In Munich in 1937, Joseph Goebbels escorts Adolph Hitler through the "Entartete Kunst" exhibition.

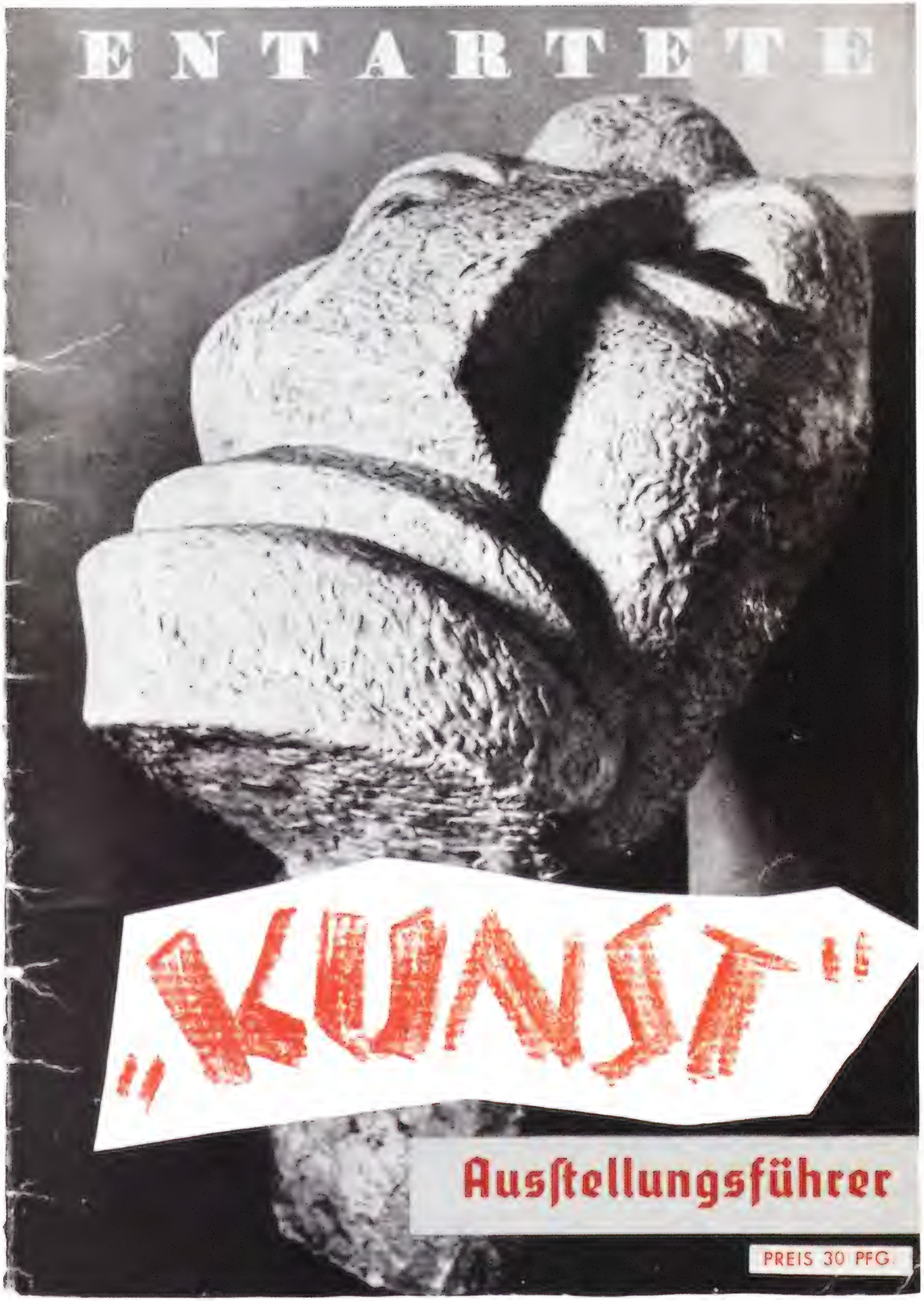
Picture yourself at an exhibition. It is crammed—indeed overfull—with works by some of Europe's leading modern artists. The walls are vibrant with severe, brilliantly colored paintings by Emil Nolde, Oskar Kokoschka, Max Beckmann, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, George Grosz and others. A crowd of visitors streams past the art with sluggish relentlessness, like a river of lava, seemingly without urgency or pleasure. Abruptly you realize there is something very wrong. Many spectators wear surly, supercilious expressions, a few appear guardedly neutral. They are more often hostile than curious. Now and then, gesturing toward a picture, someone will guffaw or make insulting remarks with a bullying tone that smothers discussion. Text accompanies the artworks, but in place of the printed historical or biographical notes are painted graffiti questioning the skills, the integrity, even the sanity of the artists. One wall is painted in sloppy parody of an abstract improvisation by Wassily Kandinsky. "All the artistic and cultural blather of Cubists, Futurists, Dadaists, and the like is neither sound in racial terms nor tolerable in national terms," reads one statement. Another describes landscapes by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Erich Nagel: "Nature as seen by sick minds." You realize that this must be a nightmare.

But this nightmare came true. In Munich in 1937, the National Socialists (Nazis) staged "Entartete Kunst"—"Degenerate Art"—a massive exhibition that heralded the end of modern art in the Third Reich. It contained 650 works and attracted more than two million visitors during its four-month run in Munich, and another million as it toured 13 cities in Germany and Austria.

Never before or since has a government made such an elaborate public effort to defame an art movement. Only 17 years ago the Soviet government bulldozed an outdoor exhibition of unsanctioned art in Moscow, but it stopped there, probably sensing that popular sentiment might favor the artists. In Germany in the 1930s, however, the Nazis saw that the time was ripe to exploit popular resentment against modern artists and intellectuals as a way of encouraging exasperation with the Weimar government, which had been in power from 1918 to 1933.

The works in "Degenerate Art" had been bought by German museums prior to the Nazis' rise to power. During the years of the Weimar Republic, and even before World War I, German museums had been very progressive in acquiring modern art. The Nationalgalerie in Berlin, for example, was the first museum in the world to acquire a painting by Paul Cézanne. The Museum Folkwang in Essen gave early public recognition to the art of Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh. But the Nazis, aware that most people looked upon modern art with suspicion, damned Weimar liberalism by associating it with the "cultural Bolshevism" that

Catalog cover for exhibition as it toured German cities featured Otto Freundlich's *The New Man* (1912).


ENTARTETE
„KUNST"
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took artistic form in Cubism, Futurism, Dada and other innovations of the avant-garde.

The sole purpose of the "Degenerate Art" show was ridicule. Paul Ortwin Rave, then a curator at the Berlin Nationalgalerie, witnessed the show and observed that "The mode of display was deliberately detrimental to the works, and the lighting was terrible. . . . The paintings were hung helter-skelter, as though fools or children had been in charge. The walls were plastered from floor to ceiling with paintings. There was no semblance of order. . . . The works were provided with inflammatory labels, commentaries and obscene jokes."

A teenager's first-hand impressions

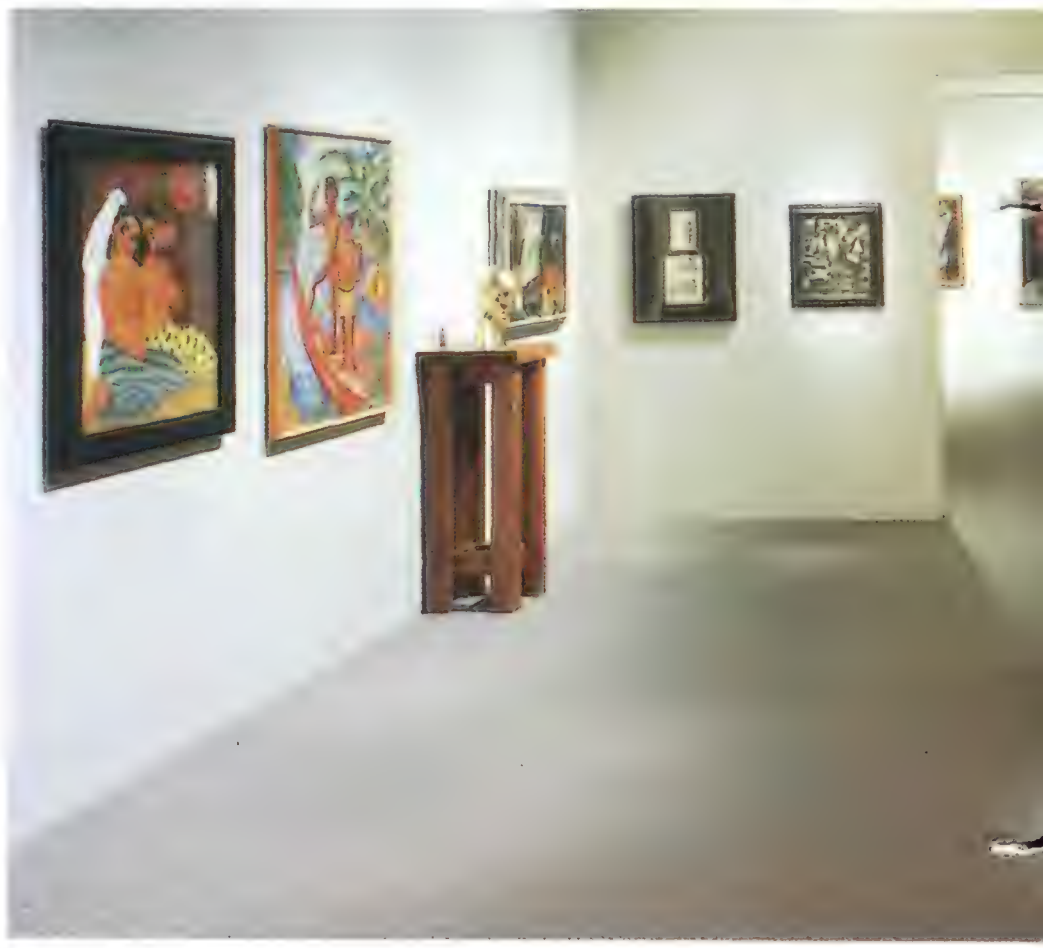
Information on the labels sometimes included prices paid for the art—in terms of the vastly inflated currency of the early 1920s—to let taxpayers "see for themselves" how public funds had been misspent under the liberal democratic Weimar regime. Peter Guenther, who at age 17 saw "Degenerate Art" twice, experienced "shock, dismay and sadness." Guenther, now a professor emeritus of art history at the University of Houston, recalls that "the rooms were quite narrow, as were the openings from one room to another. . . . People pressed up against one another to see the badly lighted works; the atmosphere was dense. From the types of works selected, their hideous hanging and placement, the graffiti-like inscriptions on the walls, the notations of price and the use of truncated quotes by museum directors and art historians it was very obvious to me that this exhibition was not intended to introduce people to modern art but to inflame them against these works. It was a blatant attempt to discredit everything on view."

For Guenther, the reactions of the visitors were as memorable as the exhibit itself. "Paintings were hung very closely together, some above others, some even over the doorways. . . . I felt an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia. The large number of people pushing and ridiculing and proclaiming their dislike for the works of art created the impression of a staged performance intended to promote an atmosphere of aggressiveness and anger. Over and over again people read aloud the purchase prices and laughed, shook their heads, or demanded 'their' money back." Alois Schardt, fired from his job as director of the Nationalgalerie in 1933, reported that the Nazis went so far as to hire actors to pose as outraged spectators, to minimize any confusion as to the proper response.

"While standing before certain works," writes Guenther, "I had wanted to say something in their defense to those who laughed and cursed and derided them, but I was too afraid to do so. I had become frightened watching the reactions of the people

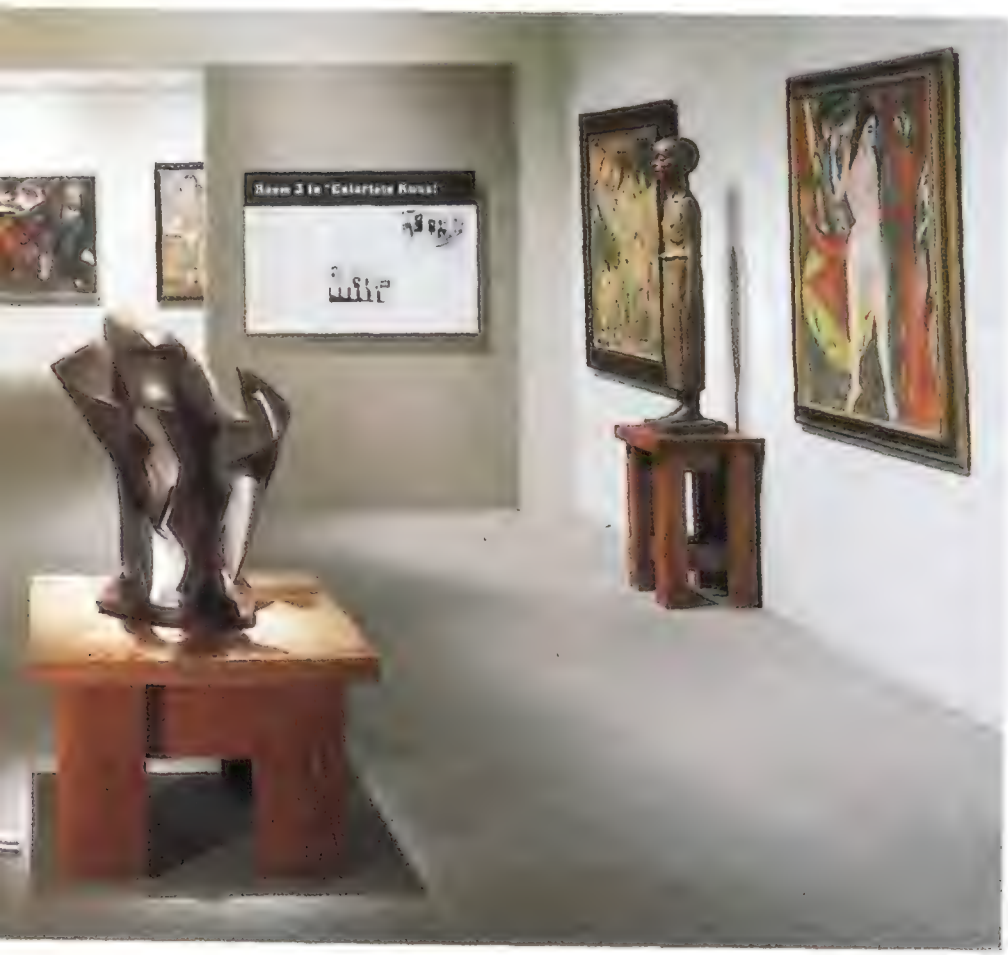
In original exhibit, works were deliberately hung crowded and askew, surrounded by insulting graffiti.

Installation at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where current show opened, treated works with dignity.



"Take Dada seriously! It's worth it" was scrawled on wall, near works by Grosz, Klee, Schwitters and others.

The exhibition, which contains 175 of the original 650 works, is now on view at the Art Institute of Chicago.



around me. What would they do to me . . . if they found out that I didn't share their disgust? A seventeen-year-old in Germany in 1937 did not challenge the opinions of his elders, especially in the atmosphere of disdain, hostility, and latent anger created by the organizers of *Entartete Kunst.*"

Stephanie Barron, curator of 20th-century art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, has spent the past several years reconstructing the history and posterity of "Degenerate Art." The result is an exhibition that opened at LACMA and is now at the Art Institute of Chicago (through September 8). "'Degenerate Art': The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany" contains 175—roughly one-quarter—of the paintings, sculptures and graphics originally assembled by the Nazis. (An effort is now under way to bring the exhibition to the International Gallery in the Smithsonian's S. Dillon Ripley Center this fall.)

In labeling art "degenerate," the Nazis cast a wide net. All such art was proclaimed to "insult German feeling, or destroy or confuse natural form, or simply reveal an absence of adequate manual and artistic skill." The roster of accused artists, in both the original exhibition and the current reprise, is impressive—Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, George Grosz, Otto Dix, Marc Chagall and many others.

Although it focuses on painting, sculpture and graphics, the exhibition also presents examples of officially condemned music, film and literature, as well as a rich selection of contemporary materials such as posters, souvenir postcards, newspapers and letters that illustrate the Nazis' condemnation of modernism. The documentary material, as much as the art itself, helps us envision the Munich staging of "Degenerate Art," for Barron's exhibition treats the art with the respect denied it by the Nazis. Although the original groupings of works are repeated, the installation is uncrowded and free of the abusive wall texts that made the original exhibition a travesty.

A sense of admiration for the winners

Most visitors to the show in Los Angeles expressed admiration for the art—Beckmann's and Nolde's works are particularly impressive—and awareness of the value of nearly everything present. Another prevalent feeling among vistors to the LACMA exhibition was a sense of admiration for the "winners"—as vindicated by history—in a colossal contest of values.

To give today's visitors a feeling for how the original exhibition was presented, a 22-foot-long scale model has been created, complete with tiny photoreproductions and inscriptions. It duplicates that portion of the show that was installed in ten rooms of Munich's former Institute of Archaeology. Although not included in

Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Wolfgang-Gurlitt Museum, Linz

Oskar Kokoschka's painting *Old Man* was one of 12 of his works in show; in 1938 he emigrated to England.

"Entartete Kunst," music was similarly judged by the Nazis, and exhibitions of "degenerate music" were staged. In the current exhibition, a visitor can, at the push of a button, listen on headphones to passages of condemned music—Schönberg, Hindemith, even Bertolt Brecht's "Mack the Knife" in the original German—as well as examples of officially approved anthems and a chilling speech by Hitler vehemently denouncing "degenerate" culture in all its forms.

The Nazis attacked modern culture on every front and in every medium (including art criticism, which they banned in 1936). But there was occasional confusion as to what was truly "degenerate." Expressionist painting, for example, once had its fascist adherents, including Joseph Goebbels, who saw it as reflecting the raw energy of German youth, until Hitler corrected him on this lapse of taste. The Expressionist painter Emil Nolde was branded a "degenerate" artist despite avowed Nazi sympathies in the regime's early years. During the war, Nolde, who remained in Germany, painted exclusively in watercolor, fearing that the smell of oil paint might betray him. "Only to you, my little pictures, do I sometimes confide my grief, my torment, my contempt," he wrote in 1944.

The work of one artist, Rudolf Belling, was inadvertently included in both "Degenerate Art" and the "Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung"—the "Great German Art Exhibition"—of officially approved works that ran concurrently in Munich. Early works of Gerhard Marcks and Georg Kolbe were confiscated from German museums (two of Marcks' sculptures were in "Degenerate Art"), yet their then current works were in favor.

Among antifascist artists and writers (especially those who chose exile), official condemnation became a sign of integrity and authenticity. Bertolt Brecht marked this irony with a poem called "The Burning of the Books," about a writer friend dismayed to find himself uncondemned:

> When the Regime ordered that books with dangerous teachings
> Should be publicly burnt and everywhere
> Oxen were forced to draw carts full of books
> To the funeral pyre, an exiled poet,
> One of the best, discovered with fury, when he studied the list
> Of the burned, that his books
> Had been forgotten. He rushed to his writing table
> On wings of anger and wrote a letter to those in power.
> Burn me, he wrote with hurrying pen, burn me!
> Do not treat me in this fashion. Don't leave me out.
> Have I not
> Always spoken the truth in my books? and now
> You treat me like a liar! I order you:
> Burn me!

The current exhibition had its beginnings, says Stephanie Barron, in the early 1980s. At that time she was researching German Expressionist sculpture for another show. "I was encountering documentation that a lot of the sculptures I was interested in had been included in 'Degenerate Art,'" she recalls. "But I was stymied at that point because there was really no documentation of the full extent of what had been in that exhibition. The original catalog is just a kind of skimpy brochure."

Barron assumed then that a full-scale reconstruction of "Degenerate Art" might be attempted in Germany in 1987, the exhibition's 50th anniversary. But although there were several modest commemorative shows in various German art institutions, no real attempt was made to reconstruct the Munich event. Meanwhile, as her own research continued, Barron unearthed in an East Berlin archive 70 installation photographs that

Kenneth Baker is the art critic for the San Francisco Chronicle, *and the author of* Minimalism: Art of Circumstance, *published by Abbeville Press in 1989.*

Selected Poems © 1947 by Bertolt Brecht and H. R. Hays; renewed 1975 by H. R. Hays and Stefan S. Brecht

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Three works by Frenchman Marc Chagall (here, *Purim*, c. 1916-18) were displayed in the "Jewish" gallery.

Deborah Weese Mayer and Robert N. Mayer

Kandinsky's *Composition "Silence"* was in the show; he taught at the Bauhaus, which Nazis closed in 1933.

record "Degenerate Art" in detail. Using these and other photographs she knew existed in Munich and in California at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, she and her German colleagues were able to reassemble for the first time a complete checklist of the artworks shown in Munich in 1937.

With the checklist in hand, she planned her own exhibition. "It really took two years," she says, "to find the still existing works and then to go after them." Of the 650 objects originally presented in Munich, "we were able to locate 200 and were able to borrow 175. In all probability about 300 of them were lost. Some were destroyed willfully, others disappeared during the war. Some we know were lost in bombings." Many works are thought to have been burned in 1939 in front of the Berlin central fire department, although it is still being debated whether artworks of historic importance, works of lesser value or just frames were burned deliberately. (Although their contempt for the avant-garde appears to have been genuine, the Nazis saw financial opportunity in their cache of confiscated modernist art and arranged in 1939 to sell 125 objects at auction in Lucerne, Switzerland, "to make some money from this garbage," as Goebbels put it.)

The 1937 "Degenerate Art" extravaganza was the largest, but not the first, event of its kind under Nazi auspices. Nor was it unanticipated. In March 1933 the Führer's Council published a manifesto titled "What German Artists Expect from the New Government," promising, among other things, that "all products of a cosmopolitan or Bolshevist nature will be removed from German museums and collections. First they should be brought together and shown to the public, and the public should be informed how much these works cost and which gallery officials and ministers of culture were responsible for buying them. Then only one useful function remains to these works of nonart.

All: Harvard University Fine Arts Museum, Cambridge

One line of the Nazis' attack was based on a 1928 book, *Kunst und Rasse* (*Art and Race*), which included paintings by Modigliani and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

They can serve as fuel for heating public buildings."

The promised purge would force modernists to "give way to the scores of artists loyal to the German tradition," as defined by Nazi esthetics. "Loyal" artists, of whom there were many, were amply represented in the "Great German Art Exhibition," the first of eight such annual exhibitions that shaped and surveyed the ideologically correct style and subjects for National Socialist painting and sculpture. They were to express the restoration of German racial integrity and cultural wholeness under Nazi rule. F. A. Kauffmann, a proponent of National Socialist realism, outlined its esthetics in a 1941 essay: "Since any renewal is essentially concerned with human beings, it is natural that the *German figure* is a highly favored theme in our modern art. Guided by a true instinct, our artists find their models primarily among those fellow citizens who are, as it were, still sound by nature. They set to work where closeness to the native soil, the restorative powers of the landscape, the protection of the

The author compared their work with photographs shown above, and argued that the artists used deformed or diseased people as their models of a physical ideal.

race from impurities, the force of deeply rooted tradition, and the blessings of beneficent labor have kept the human substance healthy. It follows from this that our contemporary painting frequently portrays the faces and figures of *men who follow the old callings close to nature*: farmers, hunters, fishermen, shepherds and woodcutters. . . . For the new Germany, any healthy variety of happiness is a welcome contribution to our program of promoting national zest. Our country is particularly intent on cultivating such happiness where it promises to enhance the performance of men and women in their basic duties of combat and fertility. . . . From this perspective, all those activities in which the beautiful human form has a right to full exposure—sun-bathing, swimming, dancing, and athletic exercise—have a particular appeal for art."

In the "Great German Art Exhibition," Barron writes in her introductory essay to the catalog, "the Nazis sought to promote mediocre genre painting as mainstream art, the most recent achievement in a continuum of centuries of German art. It was meant to wipe out any hint of the modernism . . . that had permeated museums, galleries, journals, and press since 1910. The National Socialists sought to rewrite art history, to omit what we know as the avant-garde from the history of modern art."

As Christoph Zuschlag recounts in the current show catalog, the Munich "Degenerate Art" show was the culmination of a series of lesser assaults on progressive art, in various German cities, known as *Schreckenskammern der Kunst* (chambers of horrors of art) or *Schandausstellungen* (abomination exhibitions). Tendentiously titled to link modernist esthetics with putative Jewish and Communist threats, these exhibitions were put forward as educational events and typically forecast the disappearance from public view of the disparaged objects in them.

A deliberate ring of anti-Semitism

Only 6 of the 112 artists represented in "Degenerate Art" were Jewish, but the title itself had a deliberate ring of anti-Semitism. *Entartung*—"degeneration"—is a term the Nazis borrowed from biology; it refers to a decline or deviation from normal growth. This term had been popularly associated with racist philistinism as early as 1893, when Max Nordau, a Jewish physician, published a book titled *Entartung*, arguing the superiority of traditional German art over modern works like those of the Symbolists and Pre-Raphaelites. "The strange representational methods of modern painters, the methods of the Impressionists, the dot-makers or the mosaists, the tremblers and flickerers, the screaming colorists," Nordau wrote, were the result of the literal "degeneration" of their faculties.

In 1928, five years before the Nazis took power, Nordau's notions were revived by architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg in a book titled *Kunst und Rasse* (*Art and Race*). (Schultze-Naumburg was later appointed by Wilhelm Frick, the Nazi Party's Reichstag representative from Thuringia, to replace Walter Gropius at the Weimar Bauhaus, whose prestigious faculty Frick dismissed.) In his book, Schultze-Naumburg compared photographs of people disfigured by disease or deformity with reproductions of works by Amedeo Modigliani, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and others, as if the painters' stylizations could have no end other than to propose ruined physiognomy as an ideal. This tactic of comparing modern art, to its detriment, with documents of anomaly came into play in one of the precursors of "Degenerate Art," a show in which modernist paintings were hung alongside images made by children and the insane. The brochure that accompanied "Degenerate Art" made similar comparisons.

On a related front in their war on culture, Nazis round up books for public burning in Berlin in 1933.

The painters, writers and composers who had been singled out for derision by the Nazis concurred in little but a belief in freedom as the essential precondition for creativity. Otto Dix, for example, intended much of his work—notably the brilliant suite of etchings entitled "War"—as recrimination against the horrors of military and civil conflict. Max Beckmann, who once said he painted to "reproach God for all He had done wrong," explained in 1938, "I assume . . . that there are two worlds: the world of spiritual life and the world of political reality. Both are manifestations of life which may sometimes coincide but are very different in principle. . . . My aim is always to get hold of the magic of reality and to transfer this reality into painting—to make the invisible visible through reality. It may sound paradoxical, but it is, in fact, reality which forms the mystery of our existence."

Paradoxes like that—any awareness of the irony and ambiguity of life—were what the Nazis sought to purge from the public mind, the better to rule efficiently. It seems clear that the Nazi officials concerned with art—even Hitler himself, who had failed as a painter early in life—sensed and perhaps understood the critical thrust of the art they expunged. (George Grosz commented, after his emigration to America, "I left because of Hitler. He is a painter too, you know, and there didn't seem to be room for both of us in Germany.") Yet it is still striking that the Nazis took modernism so seriously, that the stylistic qualities of art could be rallying points for popular reactionary vehemence. Barron points out that the "Degenerate Art" exhibition was only part of a nationwide campaign to drive antifascist artists and intellectuals into exile, an effort that was fueled by popular suspicion that these people were a "cabal" subverting the historic mission of German renewal.

Seeking not freedom, but connection

The Weimar Republic, which had seen 17 governments in 15 years, never became stable enough to withstand the Great Depression of 1929. It never even lost the stigma of association with the Versailles Treaty of 1919, which exacted harsh penalties on Germany and branded it and its allies with full responsibility for the horrors of World War I. Faced with the complexities of the postwar world and with the novelty of a parliamentary democracy, a generation of German youth too young to remember the war sought "not freedom, but connection," as playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal observed.

The visual fragmentation and dislocation that mark so much early 20th-century painting seem to have had a galvanizing resonance for German viewers who felt that their nation had been subjected to pulverizing retributions by the international community in the aftermath of the Great War. Yet the prevailing anti-intellectual climate does not seem enough to account for popular assent to the Nazi campaign against the avant-garde. A deeper explanation may lie in what historian Peter Gay, in his analysis of Weimar culture's demise, has called "hunger for wholeness." "The complex of feelings and responses I have called 'the hunger for wholeness,' " he writes, "turns out on examination to be a great regression born from a great fear: the fear of modernity. . . . The hunger for wholeness was awash with hate: the political, and sometimes the private, world of its chief spokesmen was a paranoid world, filled with enemies: the dehumanizing machine, capitalist materialism, godless rationalism, rootless society, cosmopolitan Jews, and that great all-devouring monster, the city. Othmar Spann, the Austrian Catholic social philosopher, whose fantasies were enormously popular in right-wing circles, offered a list of villains his readers could accept with ease: Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau, Ricardo, Marx, Darwin, filthy—*unflätig*—psychoanalysis, Impressionism, Dadaism, Cubism and the film drama."

Perhaps the Nazi campaign against progressive art could have happened as it did only at a moment when

artistic innovations were seen as expressions of a larger course of events that most people wanted to resist. The successful purge of the avant-garde certainly required totalitarian measures.

"One of the inevitable questions about the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition concerns its purpose," Barron notes. "Why did the National Socialists go to such an effort to mount, publicize and circulate it? . . . One explanation at least offers itself. If the Nazis had merely confiscated and destroyed the art, it would have been the cultural equivalent of creating a martyr. By staging *Entartete Kunst,* they were able to appeal to the majority of the German people who must have considered most modern art incomprehensible and elitist. To all modernists, not just those represented in *Entartete Kunst,* the Nazis sent the message that such art would no longer be tolerated in Germany, an official position that, thanks to the cleverly manipulated complicity of the German people, had the force of a popular mandate."

Many of Germany's great modern artists left, settling elsewhere in Europe or America, where their influence was widely felt. Beckmann, Grosz, Oskar Fischinger (whose remarkable animated films are included in Barron's show), Walter Gropius, founding architect of the Bauhaus, Brecht, Schönberg, and others came to America, where they became more or less lonely, but hardly unsung, eminences. Some of the persecuted modernists, such as Nolde and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, remained in Germany or not far from it, like Dix and Paul Klee (who died in 1939 in Switzerland).

The closer the German modernists remained to the Third Reich, the deeper, generally, was their "inner exile." Willi Baumeister, for example, was removed from his teaching job in Frankfurt in 1933 but remained in Germany, even after a confrontation with Gestapo censors. He supported himself with a job in a paint factory and kept secret the fact that he was producing art. "The dismissal was bad," he recalled in 1950, "but the social ostracism that followed was worse. . . . No one knew that I continued to paint."

More than a dozen works by Lyonel Feininger hung in "Entartete Kunst"; they included *Hopfgarten* (1920). Some artists, many of whom left Germany, came to see inclusion in the 1937 exhibition as a badge of honor.

Minneapolis Institute of the Arts

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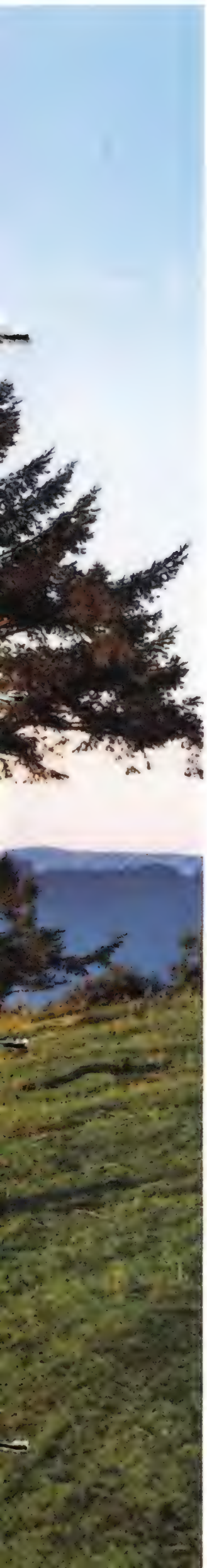

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By Sylvia Duran Sharnoff

Beauties from a beast: woodland Jekyll and Hydes

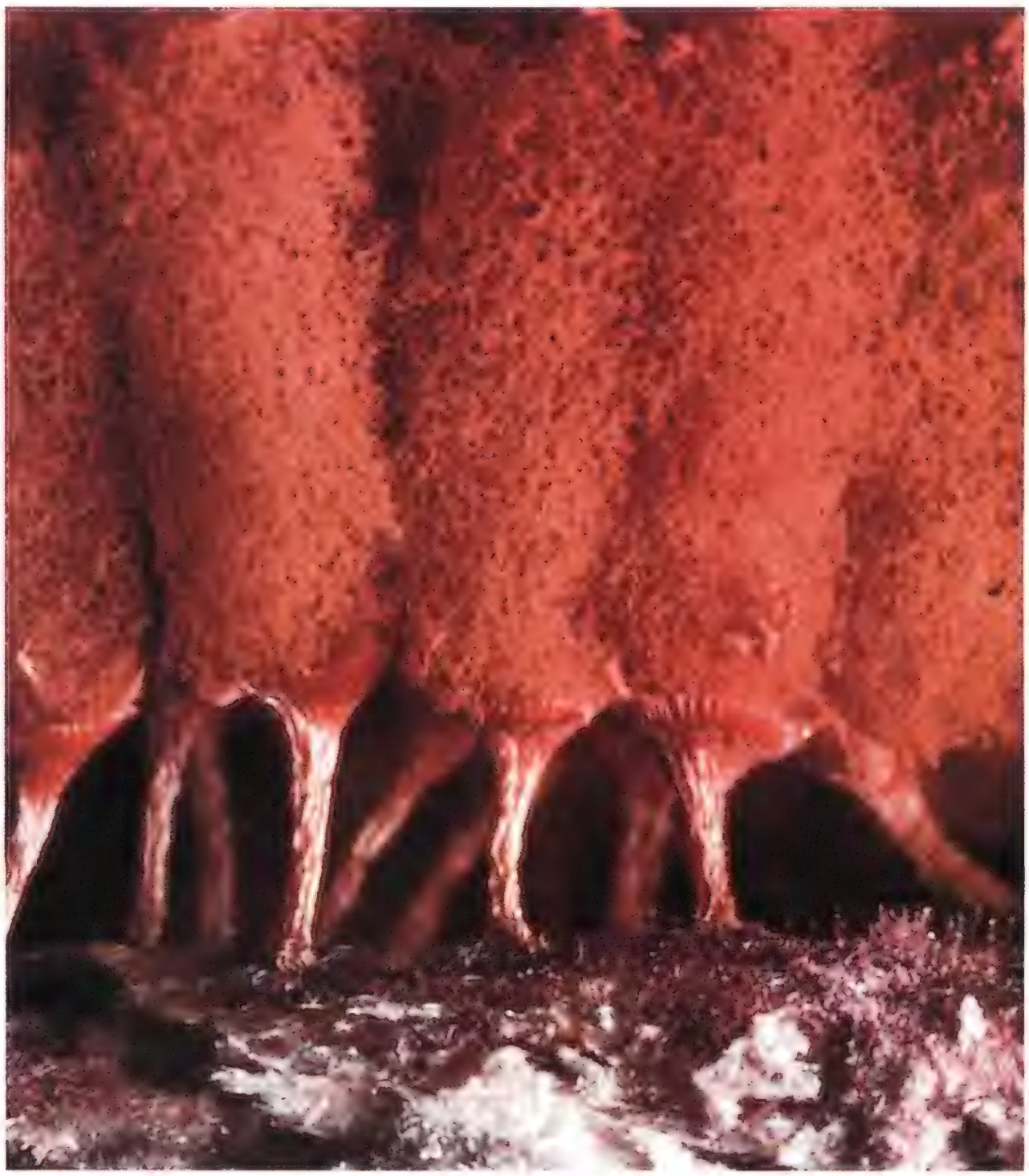
Anomalies among living things, slime molds are neither plants nor animals nor fungi, yet they hold their own among nature's jewels

The final stage in a slime mold's life cycle is usually the most beautiful. Fruiting bodies, called sporophores, can look like minute corals (left), bocci balls (center), skeins of vibrant cotton candy, less than a half-inch high.

It had been a wet spring. Now, in the summer of 1973, panic was spreading in the Dallas suburbs, on Long Island, around Boston. Pulsating yellow blobs were crawling across people's lawns and even up onto their porches. The blobs broke apart when they were blasted with water, but the pieces continued to crawl and grow—reinforcing fears that they were indestructible aliens from outer space or, at the very least, menacing mutant bacteria.

In due time, scientists assured the public that the "unidentified growing objects" were merely a stage in the bizarre life cycle of remarkable but terrestrial creatures called slime molds. Alarming as they can be to those who come across them unexpectedly, slime molds in the crawling stage are so entertaining that some people keep them as pets. In their spore-bearing stage, many slime molds are astonishingly beautiful, overlooked natural treasures.

Early botanists first noticed slime molds in the spore-bearing stage and mistakenly believed they were puffballs, those spherical fungi that sometimes release smoky clouds of spores. Hence, slime molds have traditionally been the province of mycologists, people who study mushrooms and other fungi. The experts who identified the mysterious invaders in 1973 were mycologists. While slime molds are studied by mycologists, and while they may resemble fungi during a part of their life, they take on the appearance of other living things during other portions of their life cycle. They sometimes appear as slimy blobs capable of moving



Thousands of spores, sole living parts of sporophore, may be released by single structure. Threadlike fibers of capillitium (visible in rose and yellow specimens) are usually present and, in many species, aid spore dispersal.

as fast as slugs; in an earlier stage, they take the form of microscopic protozoans. Because of this Jekyll-and-Hyde development, slime molds have been a difficult group to pigeonhole.

Students may have had an easier time when all living things could be assigned to the plant or the animal kingdom. Most single-celled organisms that could move and had no chlorophyll were called protozoans and were considered animals. The classic protozoan was the amoeba, which moves, and engulfs its food, by constantly changing its shape. With life on Earth now divided into five kingdoms, controversy lingers about where certain organisms belong. Kingdoms Animalia and Plantae have lost numerous members at the simpler end of the scale. Fungi are now in a kingdom of their own. Bacteria, along with what used to be known as blue-green algae, are in the kingdom Monera. The final kingdom, Protoctista, comprises all the ancient protozoans, true algae and some simple organisms that used to be thought of as fungi. Slime molds are included: their spores germinate into single-celled creatures. Classifying slime molds under Protoctista is also appropriate for the crawling stage, but the fruiting stage still seems more like a fungus than anything else.

The life cycle of slime molds reads like the sort of complex flowchart that computer people use. Under the right conditions of moisture and temperature, a spore germinates, and turns into either of two kinds of cell. If the surface on which the spore germinates is simply damp, such as on wet vegetation, in soil or humus, or inside rotting logs, the spore develops into a myxamoeba, which, like its namesake, can creep about its habitat. If the spore germinates in water, it develops into a swarm cell, which uses its whiplike flagella to propel it about. What is particularly intriguing about this stage of a slime mold's life is that the two types of cells are interconvertible: if its en-

Evolution of many slime mold fruiting bodies—shown with various species—begins (clockwise from top left) when veiny plasmodium becomes immobile. Structures grow from parent, changing appearance as they mature.

Most species develop spores internally, but a few (such as one at bottom right) bear them externally. Mature fruiting bodies shed the spores, assisted by wind, rain, insects. Remaining skeletal structures are left to decay.

vironment is inundated with water during a rainstorm, for example, a myxamoeba will develop flagella and transform into a swarm cell within a matter of minutes. On the other hand, when its watery habitat begins to dry up, a swarm cell will absorb its flagella and change into a myxamoeba. Such transformations may occur several times during a slime mold's development.

Myxamoebas and swarm cells eat by engulfing such things as decaying organic matter, bacteria and other microorganisms. If conditions become too dry or otherwise unfavorable, the myxamoeba can secrete resistant cell walls and survive for long periods as a round microcyst, ready to emerge again when the environment becomes hospitable. When environmental and nutrient conditions are just right, myxamoebas and swarm cells "mate."

Sexual reproduction in slime molds is a unique variation on the sperm-meets-egg theme. Myxamoebas and swarm cells both come in different mating types—genetic variations that can be thought of, very loosely, as different genders. One species of slime mold is known to have at least 18 mating types. Two myxamoebas or two swarm cells of different mating types may fuse sexually and begin to develop into the unique and amazing creature called the plasmodium.

Plasmodia, the "blobs from outer space" that so alarmed those homeowners, are typically fan-shaped with a delicate, open network of veins and a ruffled leading edge. In some species, they stay microscopic and colorless. Others are large and colorful: violet, pink or red, but most come in shades of yellow. A few species occasionally grow very large, more than three feet across. One mentioned in the scientific literature covered an entire decaying log that was a yard in diameter and ten yards long.

Even though it appears to be a single cell, like the myxamoebas or swarm cells that give rise to it, a plasmodium has multiple nuclei. All the nuclei, which can number in the millions or even billions, divide simultaneously. This rare trait, as well as other unique characteristics of slime molds, makes them extraordinarily interesting to cell biologists.

Plasmodia creep about, eating bacteria, fungi, protozoans and algae, and sometimes cannibalizing sibling myxamoebas. They generally live under leaf litter on the forest floor or inside rotting logs, where they can squeeze through narrow spaces in search of food.

Like myxamoebas, plasmodia can develop into hard, resistant resting states, called sclerotia, when conditions are bad. Some remain viable for at least seven years. In cold climates many slime molds overwinter

Writer-photographer Sylvia Duran Sharnoff specializes in natural history subjects. She wrote about lichens and their uses in the April 1984 issue of SMITHSONIAN.

as sclerotia and come to life again in warmer weather.

Scientists who study slime molds do not entirely understand how food supply, moisture and temperature interact to induce plasmodia to transform themselves into the dry fruiting bodies, the sporophores, that are the final stage of their life cycle. It is these tiny spore-bearing structures—the ones best seen with a magnifying glass—that are spectacularly beautiful. They are prizes worth searching for, no matter how silly you might feel inspecting a rotting log, scrutinizing fallen leaves or carefully examining all the dead twigs around the melting edges of a mountain snowbank. In the desert, look for sporophores on the woody base of cactus plants, on decaying cactus or on animal dung. Your reward may be a three-inch cluster of iridescent purple balls, each smaller than the head of a pin, or a patch of diminutive red cotton candy on tiny stalks. Other fruiting bodies resemble miniature leather buttons or golf balls for Lilliputians.

Slug-killing cats protect slimy pets

Slime mold spores from stationary, seemingly lifeless fruiting bodies, blown aloft on the wind, washed along by rain, or carried about by insects and mites that eat them, begin the next life cycle when they germinate as mobile cells.

Aside from the occasional, frightening encounter with large plasmodia, most people have little knowing contact with slime molds: the exceptions are the scientists who study them and the aficionados who keep them as pets. In the early 1900s, an eccentric Japanese folklorist and biological collector named Kumagusu Minakata kept slime molds in his garden. At first he reportedly had to get up every two hours during the night to protect his pets from garden slugs, but then he trained a succession of cats to drive away the vermin.

Forty years ago, a woman named Ruth Nauss kept a "garden" of slime molds in jars and dishes in the living room of her home. She fed them ground oatmeal flakes, their usual diet in laboratories. When she went on vacation, she took the most delicate along with her, tucking them in with a "warm water bottle" on cold nights. She withheld moisture from the hardier ones for several weeks before a vacation to induce them to harden into sclerotia, so she could leave them unattended. At the time she wrote about them, her oldest plasmodium had been crawling around in its dish for more than nine years.

A scientist who studied slime molds wrote in 1892: "Personally, it is not a matter of prime importance whether it be eventually shown that I have been a botanist or a zoologist." A hundred years later, their place in the great chain of life is still imperfectly resolved.

Comparative giants among slime molds, sporophores of this genus may tower an inch or so over tiny relatives.

Moss-engulfing plasmodium, replete with veins, leaves little doubt why "slime" is this creature's first name.

Iridescence is common; to see it an observer must look closely: these rosy beads are smaller than BBs.

Shimmering miniature balloons, sporophores filled with spores rip open, revealing black capillitium fibers.

Clustered sporophores resemble forest of fantastic metallic trees, but each barely tops one-eighth inch. The species develops cap atop the sporophore (seen in black cluster, lower right) that splits for spore dispersal.

By Shirley Abbott

Hot Springs, Ark., fondly recalled as a paradise lost

For a child of the 1930s it had everything: steamy spas, sinful doings, a high-living mayor and a cornucopia of Southern comforts

Small children believe that what they can see and touch constitutes the world. It's the need to regain this world, I suppose, that sends us on pilgrimages to our birthplaces. My own seemed a paradise to me, unique on Earth. In the mid-1930s, when I was born, Hot Springs, Arkansas, was a town of 20,000 or so, its ranks seasonally swelled by visitors. It is (and was) set like a jewel between two ancient hills at the edge of a vast forest. Winter lasts barely three months, and the rare snow flurry sends every inhabitant scurrying outdoors with a camera, "Quick, before it melts!"

Hot mineral waters bubble up over the stones, heated to 143 degrees Fahrenheit by some fiery furnace that started burning at Earth's heart eons before history began. In 1832, long before most people had ever heard of Yosemite or Yellowstone, Andrew Jackson declared the place a federal reservation. By 1921 it had become a national park, which gave us a sense of belonging to the public, even of being petted and admired. Besides the springs there were lakes, where the rich and poor alike went swimming and fishing—the South's great unifier, cutting across gender, race and class. (Anybody, any age, can catch fish.) "We bathe the world" was the town's slogan, and we believed it.

Horse-drawn cabs conveyed tourists along Bathhouse Row, "which became a thoroughfare of pride."

Illustrations by George Angelini

And why not? Eight elegant, stucco-and-tile, European-style bathhouses, complete with verandas and white wicker chairs, lined the main street. Other landmarks included a twin-turreted resort hotel in yellow sandstone, a cathedral-like hospital, and the Medical Arts Building, our one proud skyscraper. The latter was a warren of doctor's and dentist's offices in whose waiting rooms I passed many long childhood hours. Besides cavities, I partook of Hot Springs' prevailing hypochondria. Years before the advent of aerobic shoes and Jane Fonda, we thought incessantly of health.

There was a glamorous, dark side to our character, too. On the surface, to be sure, the town had all the markings of a county seat: the courthouse square that filled up with farmers on Saturday, the men standing around chewing and spitting, the battered pickups parked around the feed store. Breakfast reliably consisted of fresh-made biscuits and fried ham, and Sunday dinner was fried chicken with cream gravy prepared and served after church. Except for the backslidden, people went to the Lord's house Sunday evenings as well. Besides Protestant establishments of every stripe, including those of a dozen kinds of Baptists, we had two Roman Catholic churches and at least one synagogue with a large congregation.

Mayor McLaughlin "paraded up and down the streets in a fancy rig drawn by high-stepping Scotch and Soda."

Of small-town amenities, Hot Springs offered the whole list. You could safely leave your car on Central Avenue with the keys in the ignition and a pile of merchandise on the seat. Men automatically tipped their hats to women and refrained from smoking without permission or saying "damn" or even "bull" in mixed company. Schoolboys who cussed faced peremptory punishment. Even parricides no doubt said "Ma'am" and "Sir."

When I was still in hightop shoes, my father taught me what a Democrat was, but I had never seen a Republican. You could throw a rock 500 miles in any direction without hitting a one. Everybody was Smith or Wilson or Bradley or Jones or some name you could write down without having to ask the spelling. Nobody spoke standard English, or made any apologies about it. (Rather, you needed to apologize if you talked like a professor—"perfesser," a verbal slight.)

Though I could not have said so or explained why at the time, this was a white man's society. Black men ran elevators and swept floors and did a little yard work if they got lucky. Black women worked as maids or, occasionally, in laundries and restaurant kitchens. White men ran the law offices, the banks, the retail stores and the utility companies, always at the same measured pace. Nobody ever seemed to hurry.

To that extent Hot Springs was no different, as I later realized, from places like Pine Bluff or Fort Smith or Arkadelphia or Itta Bena, Mississippi, or the whole gazeteer of sweaty, godbegotten, segregated, cursed little towns strung out across Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas and all the other Southern states somnolent in the grip of poverty. We were proud—amazed, really—when President Roosevelt spoke to us as "My friends." Us?

Could "God Bless America" really apply to us?

The radio linked us to the continental United States, but our receiving sets, electronic and intellectual, were none too good. Franklin D. Roosevelt's clear patrician voice was often drowned in the static of *Ma Perkins* and *Just Plain Bill*, medicine salesmen lecturing on the importance of regular visits to the toilet, or Russ Morgan's orchestra from the Claremont Hotel, "high atop the Oakland-Berkeley hills," wherever that was. We barely conceded that other places actually did exist. Could "God Bless America" really apply to us? Had anybody remembered to rejoin the Union way back in 1865? The only anthem that I remember singing with all my heart was "Arkansas, Arkansas, 'tis

a name dear, 'tis the place I call home sweet home."

We were racist, though in our peculiar way. Black people were a fairly small minority mainly descended from people who'd migrated here over the years as servants or artisans or laborers. Our part of Arkansas was well outside the plantation South. With racism as in all other matters, however, Arkansas was not as bad as Mississippi, and people thanked God for that when they said grace. Black votes were useful, and the support of black people vital to Mayor Leo P. McLaughlin's machine. In addition, most of the white people were as hard up for cash as the blacks, which kept us from putting on airs. A profound and genuine civility existed between the races, which we whites deliberately, self-deludingly, mistook for contentment on their part. We were content. Why not they?

In other ways, too, the town suffered from a classic American split personality. As well as a spa, Hot Springs was a Sin City that long mocked the very idea of small-town democracy and an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. By the 20th century, it is true, elections were held at legally specified intervals, but the poll-tax system common in most Southern states at the time enabled our public officials to count returns in advance. It cost a dollar to vote: not much. But everybody in the cemetery voted, and if you were on the city payroll and failed to come in with your quota, or your Aunt Mathilda voted the wrong way, you were out of a job. Hot Springs paved its streets and outfitted its police with payoffs from sin and illegal gambling. Town fathers, even a few town mothers, consorted with the famous criminals who vacationed here, beginning with Al Capone in the 1920s and progressing right on up through Lucky Luciano. "Vacation" was the operative verb, but who knew?

For practical and ceremonial purposes, the chief executive in my childhood was Mayor Leo P. McLaughlin: a hand-tailored, two-toned, self-created Southern version of New York's Gentleman Jimmy Walker. He lived in the loveliest old white frame Victorian mansion in town, with stables attached and a private park nearby. Red carnation fixed in his crisp lapel, Leo paraded up and down the streets in a fancy rig drawn by high-stepping Scotch and Soda. (Scotch and sodà, a gangster's highball! They probably drank such concoctions in New York and Chicago, I thought. That's what I planned to drink when I grew up, if the day ever came.)

Mayor McLaughlin was actually a teetotaler, and along with savvy and far less visible colleagues in the civic machine, presided over the courts and held other important offices. They saw to it that as the healthful

"Inside those bathhouses people confiscated your clothing and ruthlessly wrapped you in a sheet."

hot water flowed into the bathtubs, the cash flowed through the horsebooks, the casinos and the courts. They tried, with commendable success, to keep the state police at bay and control the greed of the governor, and to fend off the unwelcome attentions of G-men or T-men lurking in the shadows.

Many of us suspected that the real kingpin was actually Owen Madden—"Owney." A Prohibition whisky baron exiled from New York, onetime owner of Harlem's Cotton Club and lover of Mae West (whose career in films he may have underwritten), Owney Madden retired to Hot Springs after serving time for murder, married a local lady and settled down in a rose-trimmed bungalow near St. John's Roman Catholic Church. Some people said Owney told the mayor what to do, others that Leo graciously allowed Owney to live among us so long as he kept his nose clean, in the local phraseology. In any case, this gangster or ex-gangster made large donations to the Boys' Club and other good causes. When his tough-looking friends from New York and Chicago came to visit, our policemen remained polite.

In some towns you needed to be born into the right family; in others you needed a degree from Harvard Law or a trust fund. But in our town you needed pull. The time always came when you had to get hold of somebody, if not the mayor, the county clerk or the city attorney, the dogcatcher, the truant officer, or at least a policeman to tear up your traffic ticket. Such pull as my family possessed arose from the fact that my father

Shirley Abbott is a writer who grew up in Arkansas. This article is adapted from her new book, The Bookmaker's Daughter, *published by Ticknor & Fields.*

was a bookmaker; that is, he worked as a clerk, board marker and cashier in one of the swankier horsebooks, the Southern Club.

Among our notable attractions was the racetrack, Oaklawn Park. Here in early spring the thoroughbreds raced: our year began in February when the track opened. In late December the owners and trainers—a sleekly itinerant society more self-contained even than that of the gamblers and gangsters—would begin checking in to hotels all over town and enlivening the restaurants and the promenades.

We could hear the hooves pounding the soft turf

By February, as you passed the track you could smell the fresh, sweet aroma of hay and horses, could glimpse the glossy, powerful creatures being led about by their grooms. The elementary school I attended was only a block away: when classroom windows were open, we could hear the crowds roaring, the hooves pounding the soft turf. Third-graders knew what the daily double had paid. Sixth-graders laid odds and gambled away their lunch money. As a mine is the soul of a mining town, the racetrack was the soul of Hot Springs. The Ministerial Alliance and other important segments of the community might bitterly object to all this, but the power structure at the county courthouse and city hall laughed at them. Like Romans in the age of Antoninus, we basked in our good fortune and assumed our way of life was permanent.

I used to shut my eyes at night and try to envision the core of fire that made the water bubble and steam, half expecting it to blow us all into archaeology, dusty corpses, fallen columns, paralyzed by lava like Pompeii (another loose-living resort town). But no eruption has ever occurred. Chilled, aching humanity began bathing here long ago, so the story goes, wallowing gratefully in the warm mud. The Caddo, the Quapaw, the Natchez, the Natchitoches and the Cherokee, sibling tribes within the Mississippian culture, discovered a merciful god in the springs, it is said. Some taught their children that the first man and woman had emerged from the steaming waters on the stones. Perhaps these springs were what Ponce de León sought in Florida, the fountain of youth, the magic waters that washed away the years. In autumn of 1541, Hernando de Soto and his men paused at the springs, or so they must have, for according to the chronicler of the expedition, the Spaniards rested for a month in a place where corn was plentiful, and their horses "drank so copiously from the very warm and brackish lake, that they came in heaving, their bellies swollen." Men and beasts proceeded southward then, looking for a place to winter, and de Soto soon died of fever.

The French came next, fur trappers and traders.

"When the bullets stopped flying, the police chief showed his face and the fire bell clanged hysterically.

The Gallic touch survives in dozens of place names, chiefly rivers and creeks: for instance, Fourche-a-Loupe and Glazy-Peau, or "Freeze-Your-Hide," creeks; and Montcerne, now the Mazarn rivers (one Little and one Big). In the 1670s Jacques Marquette, the Jesuit missionary, gave Arkansas its name, adopting the Indian word for "land of the downstream people." In 1682 the Chevalier de la Salle visited Arkansas as well, though not the springs, and in one of history's small ironies, claimed this rough, primeval terrain for Louis XIV. Not until the 1790s, when the Eastern Seaboard was already thickly populated with immigrants from the British Isles, was the first child born in Arkansas to English-speaking parents. The territory joined America in 1803, as part of Thomas Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase from Napoleon I. The President at once dispatched William Dunbar and Dr. George Hunter to explore the already fabled springs.

Over the years, the promise of improved health and reports of easy money brought tourists, and sometimes

On the plank sidewalk and street wet with blood and brains, people wept in horror at the wages of sin."

turned them into settlers as well, though they tended to come not with Bibles and plows and sacks of seeds but with swollen knees, cricks in their necks and charley horses. According to an 1885 report, pilgrims came to the springs for rheumatism, locomotor ataxia, lupus, measles, ulcers and dyspepsia, eczema, blood poisoning, stricture, enlarged glands, gout, boils, tumors and womb disease. Although the subject was seldom mentioned, the commonest ailments "cured" at the spa after arthritis were syphilis and gonorrhea, treated in pre-penicillin times with sitz baths (useless) and mercury injections (lethal eventually to both the spirochete and its carrier). Syphilis was listed on the books as "neuralgia," pronounced as two words, "New Ralgia," and if you had a long-term case of it, "Old Ralgia." One spring was even known by that name, Old Ral for short.

This was a democratic haven, according to Stephen Crane, one of several eyewitnesses in the 1890s. Though rich people always came to Hot Springs and enjoyed splendid accommodations, the authorities always provided plenty of cheap bathing facilities. Curiously enough, in the early days it was the springs themselves that were segregated—not according to race but according to what ailment each spring was supposed to help; black and white, male and female, bathed together in springs variously designated as healing places for the kidneys, the liver, the feet, the stomach and the skin. One spring was entirely reserved for warding off old age.

If the waters didn't fix you up, an army of doctors, homeopaths and quacks offered miracles in offices and hotel rooms. Indeed, the medical men sent out "drummers," impressment gangs who hauled sick people bodily from incoming trains or stagecoaches and carried them off willy-nilly to be doctored. The runoff from the springs in the early days turned the main street into an open sewer, and a journalist from New York reported that thousands of pigs ran free beside the warm creek rolling down the valley, crisscrossed

by footbridges over it. Laundresses did their washing in the creek and hung the clothes on the bridges to dry. Civilized life was a sometime thing: in 1876, one woman bather found a water moccasin in her bathtub. The incident caused no end of bad publicity. Management began to look out for snakes.

However, bathhouse porch conversations about bad backs and scrofulous symptoms quickly wore thin, and by early afternoon convalescents needed a shot of whisky and an hour or two at craps or blackjack or in the life-giving sunshine at the racetrack. What were these people to do once they had bathed in the waters if not drink, gamble and have fun?

A haven for riverboat gamblers

From the first, we attracted a high proportion of scoundrels. In the harsh years after the Civil War, Hot Springs became a haven for Mississippi riverboat gamblers and Confederate veterans and on-the-lam characters passing themselves off as Confederate veterans, and for rough trade of one kind and another, a spot known to everybody in the United States who was either sick or on the make or both, anybody who had given up on the sweat of his brow, except as a source of skin irritation.

Indeed, it was the Wild West. By 1884 a score of gambling houses were operating along the main street alone. "The more a man laid down the less he had to pick up," one sportsman observed. The police were always in cahoots and on the take—or openly subsidized to serve the gamblers, a system so convenient that it was retained intact into modern times. The stagecoach route from Malvern, the nearest railway depot, was worked by such bandits as Jesse and Frank James and the Younger brothers—unmolested by Hot Springs lawmen—who handily stripped incoming travelers of their cash and jewelry before they even got to the spa. Years later, when he had abandoned his career as a highwayman, Cole Younger visited the spa as a temperance lecturer. Frank James ended up working at a souvenir stand in a Hot Springs amusement park.

The boss gambler in the 1880s was a black-haired Irishman named Frank Flynn. In his surviving tintypes he wears the expression of a man who could watch his best friend die on the rack and never whimper. One day a Texas card shark arose from the poker table with too large a portion of the house bankroll in his pocket. "Young man," Frank Flynn said, "you haven't won enough to pay your fine for gambling." The fellow just laughed, and a few minutes later, out on the street, an officer of the law arrested him and imposed a fine exactly equivalent to his winnings. (Never try to beat the house, my father told me.)

But Flynn helped engineer an event that altered the

"The town had all the markings of a county seat: the courthouse square filled up with farmers on Saturday;

course of Hot Springs history, and possibly that of crime in America as well. About the mid-1880s, a genuine Confederate veteran and high roller, Maj. S. A. Doran, showed up in Hot Springs and opened a bigger saloon than Flynn's. Getting ready for the showdown, both Doran and Flynn began hiring private armies of quick-draw artists in Stetson hats, killers and drifters, the flotsam and jetsam of postwar society, men known from Dodge City to Tombstone.

As the rivalry deepened, Major Doran opened his casino, the Palace, about where the Southern Club would eventually be built. According to the newspaper account of the day, the place was "thronged with lawyers, doctors, bankers, the most respectable citizens of the place, crowded around faro or stud-horse poker games, or at the supper tables groaning under gigantic pyramids of chicken-salad and sandwitches; whisky and champagne flowed like water. The rough element was there, too, but on its best behavior, for scattered about the rooms were the Major and his satellites, well-heeled and ready for action."

The next days were tense. The dealers kept their rifles by their tables, and one eye on the door. Sud-

the men standing around chewing and spitting, the battered pickups parked around the feed store."

denly, Frank Flynn sent Major Doran a challenge to come out on the street and shoot it out. Cigar in teeth, six-gun drawn and cocked, an eyewitness reported, the Major came down the stairs and shot Flynn in the chest, lightly wounding him: "I know I hit him once over the heart. I saw the dust fly off his coat. Next time I hit him I'll plug him in the eye."

But the wounded Flynn mustered his gunslingers and rented a hotel room looking out on the Palace, intending to turn it into a sniper's nest. (True to form, local gamblers, perched on a balcony nearby, were laying odds and taking bets.) But the next morning, Major Doran posted his hired guns up and down the street in doorways and behind tree trunks and waited until Flynn and two of his brothers, heavily armed, made their way along Bathhouse Row in a horse-drawn cab. At the Major's signal, the troops opened fire, as if it had been Antietam.

The cab driver was shot right off his box and died before he hit the street. One of Frank's brothers was killed at that moment, too. Frank and another brother leapt out into a shower of gunfire, attempting to take cover; both were wounded. Two passers-by, including the driver of a little dray and a man waiting for the barbershop to open, were gunned down. When the bullets stopped flying, the police chief showed his face, and the town fire bell clanged hysterically. On the plank sidewalk and the street, wet with blood and brains, people wept in horror at the wages of sin.

A citizens' committee collared Flynn and Doran and any other rascal who could walk, and ran them out of town. Dee Brown, the novelist and historian, calls the showdown on Central Avenue "a precursive model for the bootlegger battles on the streets of Chicago forty years later. On visits to Hot Springs in the 1920s, Chicago's most famous son, Al Capone, may have heard about the Flynn-Doran battle. In 1884, however, instead of an automobile, the vehicle was a horse-drawn cab, and instead of Tommy-guns the weapons were western-style six-shooters."

Getting rid of pigs and drummers

But Hot Springs was fed up with crime in the streets. They covered up the old bathing holes and tore down the footbridges and slaughtered the pigs and passed a law against drummers shanghaiing trade. They rerouted the filthy, warm creek running down the floor of the valley, paving it over so that it became a thoroughfare of pride. They built bathhouses of tile and marble and steel, with fine porcelain tubs and copper pipes and even music rooms, and in a veritable seizure of virtuousness sternly segregated the facilities so that no woman bather could ever catch a glimpse of a man or a man of a woman. Now that gentility had become the watchword, racial segregation was also strictly practiced. With the election of Mayor McLaughlin in 1926, a 20-year Pax Romana began, a regime characterized by the civics lessons I learned at my father's knee. Kids who'd never heard of the Bill of Rights knew this much: a "liberal" was a person in favor of the status quo, i.e., a person who voted for Leo P. McLaughlin. (We, of course, were liberals.) A "reformer" was anybody else, and reformers were pretty scarce. "Politics" was a form of "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours."

So I came into this realm in its twilight years, and how glorious they were! Sleeping cars backed into the depot—this was a spur line, with no roundhouse—bringing carloads of celebrities, politicians, criminals and others wishing to be bathed on one side of Central Avenue and shaved on the other. In 1946 more than a million people took baths; in one day alone the Arlington Hotel gave 750 baths and 500 massages. No one even counted the bets placed that year at the track and in the horsebooks. In those days, when only the picture show had air-conditioning, the horsebook doors and windows would be open and the floor fans humming,

and as you strolled down Central Avenue on a summer afternoon, you could hear the results of the sixth race at Saratoga broadcast over the loudspeakers, and the scratches at Belmont. The idea that everyone involved in this operation ought to have gone to the penitentiary only increased our sense of well-being. The stylish facade of the Southern Club, where my father worked, was decorated with chrome-and-black mirrors and had a canopy to shelter horseplayers from the rain as they descended from their Packards. The upper windows were shaded by striped awnings, patterned after those at Monte Carlo.

Across the street, lined up like dowagers at a tea dance, stood the bathhouses: the Fordyce, Buckstaff, Lamar, Maurice, Hale; the Superior, the Ozark and the Quapaw. "Can you name them, can you name them?" children chanted in the back of the car, for these names meant more than the Seven Seas or the Great Lakes or even the continents. And inside those bathhouses people confiscated your clothing and ruthlessly wrapped you in a sheet, put you into a steam tub where only your head stuck out, and then into a bathtub so huge you feared drowning, in water so hot that some people cried, and then mercilessly raked your body with a coarse bath mitt and a big, rough Turkish towel. Tile floors only briefly cooled your roasted feet, but then you lay on a hard metal cot while hot packs were slapped on your body like poultices, cups of hot water poured down your throat, and a large-armed woman, her hair and white uniform soaked with sweat, massaged and pounded and slapped you until every cell in every muscle had relaxed and you lay, a blob of overheated flesh, your brain shorted out and your circuit breakers tripped, with no desire ever to get up and be gone.

"My father was a bookmaker; that is, he worked in one of the swankier horsebooks, the Southern Club."

But when you walked out, you might sit on the porch of the Arlington Hotel, which towered over the town like a tiara. Only ladies and gentlemen mounted its stately stairs. Inside the flapping, revolving doors, uniformed attendants would bow, ceiling fans solemnly turn, and the orchestra play fox-trots until 2 in the morning—and all that only after you'd dined off a white tablecloth, with the waiters bobbing all around and carrying the entrees under silver domes.

You couldn't look at the Arlington without remembering Alphonse Capone and his brother Ralph, who had lodged here, in this very hotel, whenever they needed a vacation from murder. The mayor and the judges and the lords of the casinos and the doctors and all the powers of the town could reserve their tables right next to gangsters. The clarinets and saxophones would be singing in the ballroom, and the lovely, innocent Hot Springs women would be filing up and down the long staircase, coiffed in little pompadours so carefully secured with bobby pins and wearing fluttering, slim dresses that came all the way to their shoe tops—blue chiffon, or peach, with hems in handkerchief points—and white gloves and the wristwatch strapped on top.

Step-close-step around the dance floor

Each lady would be wearing an orchid on her shoulder strap (Oh, Hubert, can you fasten this on me, I can never get it straight), and they'd all eat fried chicken with mashed potatoes and drink highballs and step-close-step around the dance floor, wedded wives and dental surgeons and possessors of the Cadillac franchise and Honorable Judges and Prominent People of all sorts rubbing haunches with Al and Ralph and their goons and doxies. The Arlington was Mount Olympus, better than the Rainbow Room or the Palmer House or the Cotton Club, better than New York or Chicago where the black grit and the bullets

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(Gary Comer being the founder of Lands' End, Bernie Roer its first Creative Director.)

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It got wider (and still more accommodating), to handle D-rings and the carrying straps customers asked for.

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flew like dandelion floss. This was what money really could buy, and it was here, right here; what else in the world could matter?

The Capones had come in the 1920s, long before I got there, and in any event, children did not attend dances at the Arlington. But these things were more real to me than if I had taken part in them.

I was utterly unprepared to face disaster, in my 12th year, when the empire crumbled. The Visigoths, who arrived at the gate just after World War II, were a group of ex-Marines, just home from Iwo Jima. They aimed to close the doors of sin forever and restore democracy to the hometown they had fought to protect. Voiding all those phony poll-tax receipts required the aid of the federal court, but these handsome young reformers beat the McLaughlin machine as handily as they had conquered the Japanese.

Why were the city walls so easily breached? A polity controlled by minor despots manipulating the poll tax was headed for history's dustbin anyway. So was an economy founded upon the therapeutic powers of hot water. The decline of Hot Springs as a spa was implicit in the discovery of antibiotics. Penicillin actually does cure some venereal diseases and many of the other ailments that had so long brought trade to the baths. Other advances in medical science and in public health also unseated the city of health and sin. The advent of universal refrigeration and a carefully monitored food supply surely nipped a lot of chronic "dyspepsia" in the bud, and reduced the need for dosing one's innards with mineral water. For such conditions as "female complaints" and kidney disease, people now looked to surgery, drugs and high-tech procedures conducted in hospitals.

In the early 1950s, Congress, with Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver in the lead, began one of its persistent investigations into the connections between illegal gambling and organized crime. To our horror, its all-seeing eye was frequently turned on Hot Springs. Unpleasant laws were passed, requiring bookies to obtain a federal tax stamp before they could operate. Increasingly, as time went on, the bookmaker gave way to the off-track betting parlor, the state lottery, the legal casino—whose profits went in some measure into the coffers of the state.

The social forces I've just attempted to sketch were anything but clear to me or even to my bookmaker father; all we knew was that shutting sin's doors created hard times for my family and for Hot Springs. The end of the golden age of gambling and bathing no doubt played a role in my eventual decision to seek my fortune in some other part of the country. Like millions of other people, both black and white, I fled the postwar South and went Northward in search of a better life—playing my own small part in one of the largest internal demographic movements to take place in America. As an excited, terrified young woman boarding one of the last passenger trains out of the old Missouri-Pacific depot in 1956, I had no idea that I was taking part in history.

Not long after I left, so did Leo P. McLaughlin. Deprived of his high office and then dragged into court like a common criminal, this dandy and glad-hander had turned into an embittered recluse. In 1958, with neither wife nor children to survive him and fearing for the welfare of his beloved horses, he arranged for Scotch and Soda to be put to death. Then he checked into a local hospital and died, apparently of pneumonia. The rumor flew round town that the mayor had systematically hidden cash in the walls of his mansion all those years—for surely his income off the rackets had amounted to millions. Thus it was that vandals brutally ransacked the McLaughlin homestead; though many people still believe the walls were stuffed with hundred-dollar bills, our master manipulator had apparently died broke.

The doors of vice persistently reopened

The mayoral properties were soon turned into a supermarket parking lot. The doors of vice, however, persistently reopened. In the 1960s, with the complicity of Gov. Orval Faubus (who'd become infamous worldwide two years earlier as defier of the U.S. Supreme Court's order to integrate Little Rock's Central High School), Owney Madden and a group of investors opened Las Vegas-style casinos in Hot Springs. Sin City flourished once more. In this wide-open town, Bathhouse Row crumbled and was padlocked, but slot machines and prostitution were growth industries. The Southern Club, once the sedate, mahogany-lined lair of gentlemen in three-piece suits, with good cigars and

racing forms, was fitted out with dice tables, blackjack, roulette wheels and one-armed bandits.

Yet it was all due to crash once more.

In the late 1960s, almost the end of the epoch, under the governorship of Winthrop Rockefeller, and no doubt with the mandate of the voters of Hot Springs, state police closed all the casinos and smashed the slot machines with rifle butts, made a bonfire of the contraband gambling equipment and buried the rubble with bulldozers.

I go to Hot Springs often. I go, compelled to return like a homing pigeon, though in fact there is nowhere in particular to hang my toothbrush anymore. I am a stranger now. The city I walked as a schoolgirl has been partly effaced, but this place is still mine. Horseplayers amuse themselves at the racetrack, the only relic of our shady past that continues to thrive. But the Southern Club has become a wax museum, filled with garish figures of Clark Gable, Mae West and Sophia Loren. Leering companionably from a corner is a life-size Al Capone, chewing a fat cigar. Owney Madden and Leo P. McLaughlin have not yet been immortalized in wax.

Along the avenue, the old magnolia trees bloom and shed their velvet petals, and the willows waver in the summer breeze. All is seemly, quiet, cordial. But if you learned your first lessons in government here in the 1930s and '40s, then New York City politics, or Watergate, or even the savings and loan scandal could hardly come as a surprise.

"The Arlington was Mount Olympus, better than the Rainbow Room, the Palmer House or the Cotton Club, better than New York or Chicago where the black grit and the bullets flew like dandelion floss."

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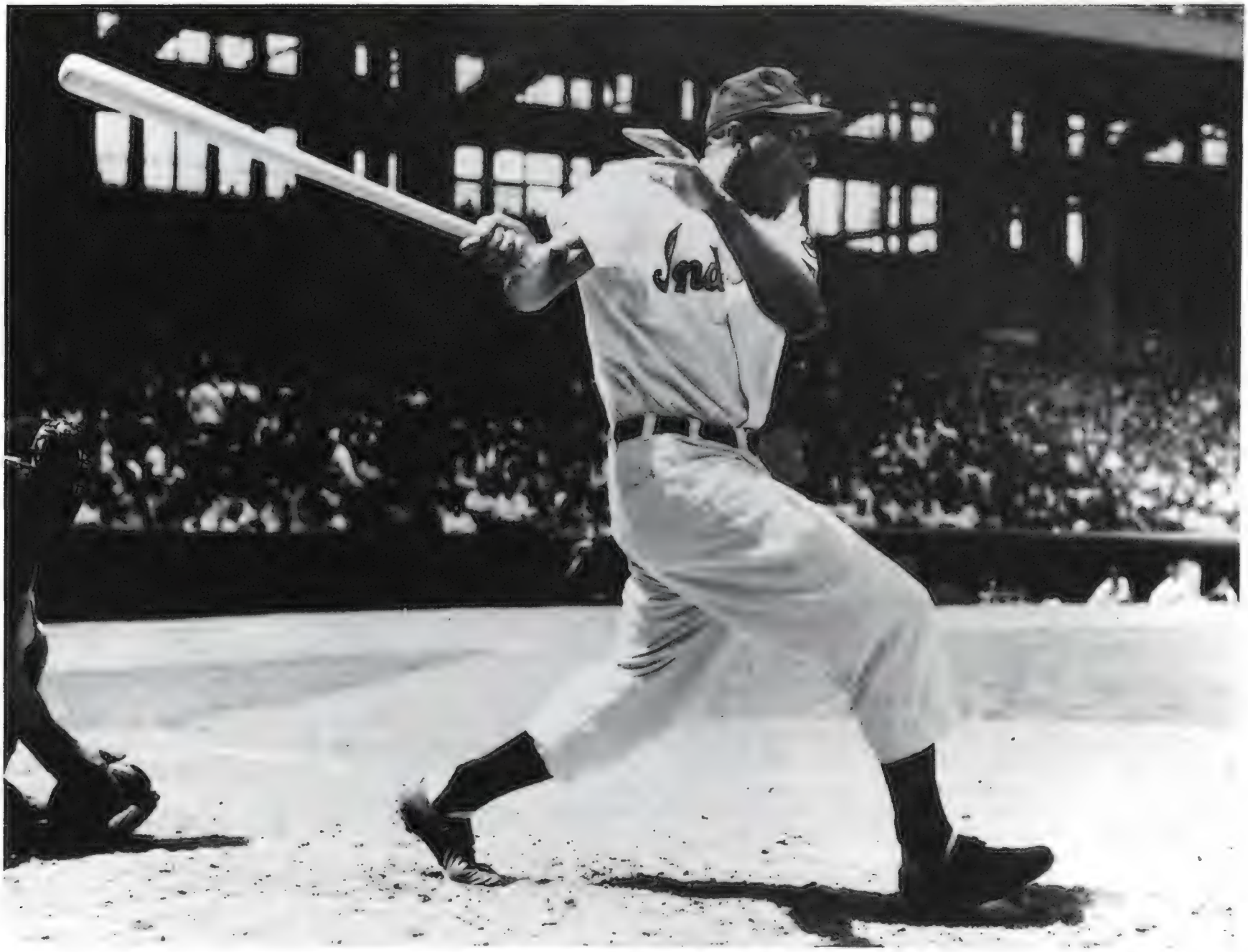

Swinging with powerful grace, his signature, the Indians' Luke Easter blasts another out-of-sight hit.

In just three seasons with Cleveland during the early '50s, he slammed 86 homers and batted in 307 runs.

By Daniel Cattau

So, maybe there really is such a thing as 'the natural'

In a different time and in another place, baseball legend Luke Easter might have become one of the game's most celebrated sluggers

Spring training, baseball's seamless ritual of hope and renewal, is kind to both rookies' dreams and old-timers' memories. In the spring of 1969, minds spun backward as Luke Easter took a graceful, powerful swing, blasting a fungo into the sun-bleached Arizona sky. Willie Mays immediately spotted the Cleveland Indians batting coach from the San Francisco Giants dugout and went over to pay his respects.

Mays, as a 17-year-old outfielder with the Birmingham, Alabama, Black Barons, had played against Easter's Homestead Grays during the 1948 Negro League World Series. Now Mays was nearing the end of his Hall of Fame career while Big Luke was putting in a few months as a coach to qualify for a pension.

The scene moved James McGee, a San Francisco sports columnist, to ponder what might have been. "Luke Easter was the greatest home-run hitter in the history of baseball who will never make the record books," he wrote. "Maybe he might have been the greatest ever, record book or not. But nobody will ever know. . . . Easter will be a legend passed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. . . . In

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At Washington's old Griffith Stadium, Homestead Grays teammates greet Easter after he larruped yet another home run, 1947.

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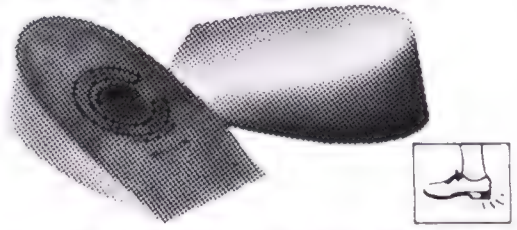

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his brief career, he was the only man [besides Babe Ruth] who singly and by his own prodigious feats drew thousands into the park to see him. He was a one-man show."

In a game filled with improbable lore, lustrous feats and divinely inspired names, Luke Easter today is largely forgotten, a 6-foot-4½, 240-pound footnote in baseball history. A Ruthian home-run hitter and personality, Easter is a legend and a name in need of resurrection.

Like Jose Canseco of the Oakland Athletics today, Easter was known as a slugger's slugger. He used to say of his home runs, "I hit 'em and forget 'em," though no one else ever did.

In 1949, Roy Campanella of the Brooklyn Dodgers overheard his teammates say that no one had ever hit the ball into the center-field bleachers at New York's old Polo Grounds, 475 feet from home plate. He corrected them. Easter had done it in a 1948 Negro League game against the New York Cubans. "He hit it halfway up the stands, about 500 feet," says Bob Thurman, a Grays teammate. "The thing about it—it was a line drive."

In a home game against the Washington Senators in June 1950, Easter, then a Cleveland Indians first baseman, hit what is believed to be the longest home run ever at cavernous Municipal Stadium. The 477-foot shot, which one writer called "eerie," went over the right-field upper deck auxiliary scoreboard, previously outer space for baseballs.

After Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier in 1947, Easter was the first black player who looked ready to challenge baseball's sacred home-run records. Signed by Bill Veeck, the maverick Cleveland Indians owner, in 1949, Easter became an instant sensation with the Triple-A

Author Daniel Cattau, who lives in Chicago, is working on a book about the integration of baseball.

San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast League, then an Indians farm team. In 80 games Easter hit 25 home runs, drove in 92 runs and batted .363—while playing on a broken kneecap. No Pacific Coast rookie since Ted Williams or Joe DiMaggio ever had so glorious a debut.

The minor-league version of Babe Ruth regularly drew overflow crowds. And Easter's batting prowess strained the team's resources: Padres trainer Les Cook found himself wiring home for more practice balls when Easter exhausted the local supply. "We used to get along with six dozen balls a week on the road," he reported ruefully. "Now with Easter slamming about six out of the parks every batting practice, we use 14 dozen a week and still run short."

In three seasons with the Indians, from 1950 to 1952, Easter batted in 307 runs and hit 86 home runs. Even so, statistics, the barometer of baseball greatness, tell as much about Easter's career as a blurb on a book cover.

Barred from major league baseball because of his color and at first ignored by the Negro Leagues, Easter, in truth, had an astonishing career. He turned 35 years old in his first full season with the Indians in 1950, only three years after he started playing baseball professionally in the Negro Leagues. (Easter also played 11 years in Triple-A baseball, where he hit 269 home runs.)

Easter still amazes baseball people, who never knew his exact age or much about his background. Al Rosen, general manager of the San Francisco Giants and an Indian teammate of Easter's, is known as an excellent judge of baseball talent. In an interview at his Candlestick Park office, Rosen said: "Had Luke come up to the big leagues as a young man, there's no telling what numbers he would have had. . . . He was a streak hitter who could carry a club. Instinctively, he did all the right things." Rosen then paused, adding, "Maybe there is such a thing as 'the natural.'"

Most of all, Easter represents a generation of black players robbed of the right to be remembered. He, like many fellow players in the Negro Leagues, was past his prime when baseball was integrated.

When I first saw Luke Easter in the late '50s, he was an ageless minor-league folk hero with wire-rimmed glasses and aching legs playing in the cozy, green fields of old Offermann Stadium, home of the Buffalo Bisons. When Easter came to bat, the fans and the neighborhood took notice.

The most imposing part of the stadium was the 60-foot-high scoreboard that towered above the centerfield fence 400 feet from home. Since 1924, when the stadium was built, no one had ever hit a home run over the scoreboard. On a windless June night in 1957, with a trace of haze in the air, the left-handed-hitting Easter stunned the fans, taking a Columbus Jets southpaw's pitch deep into center field.

The ball disappeared into the night before the fans, now roaring like Niagara Falls, realized it had cleared the scoreboard. A pioneer computer calculated that Easter's blast ball went 506.4 feet. (He accomplished the same feat two other times.)

But Easter did more than hit home runs: he rarely turned down a request to visit a sick child or promote a charity. Like the great "Bambino" Ruth,

Indians mob Easter after his homer clinched a victory over Yankees, 1950.

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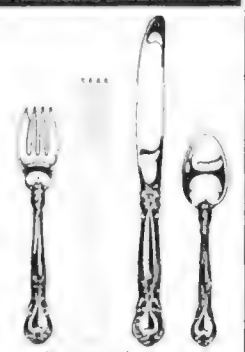

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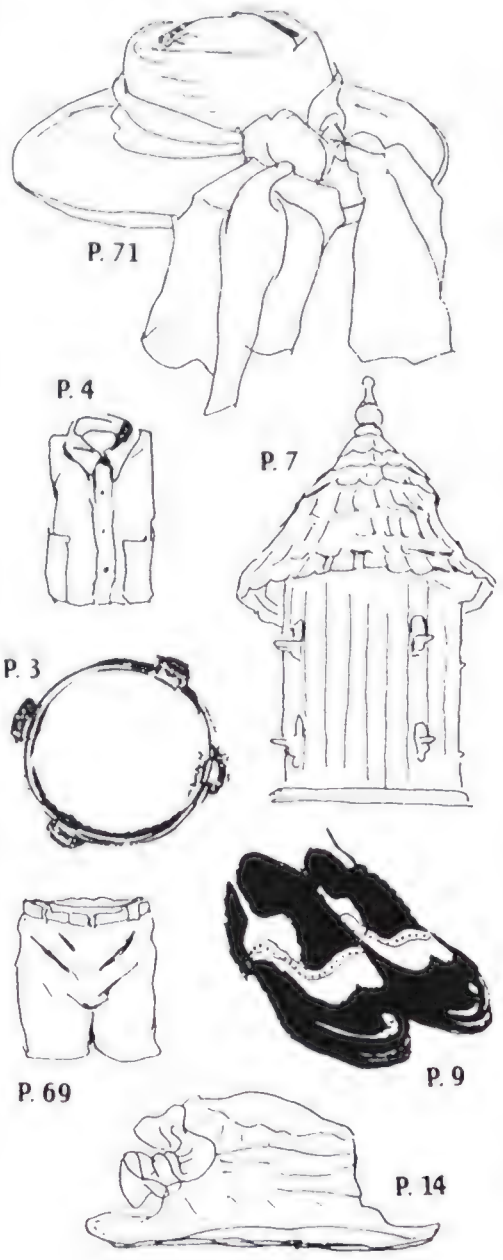

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Easter and centerfielder Larry Doby return from an Indians road trip, 1951.

Big Luke basked in the attention. In the late '50s, the Bisons were in the International League and traveled to Cuba to play the Havana Sugar Kings. Returning to Miami, Easter took offense when an airport customs inspector failed to recognize him. Easter yelled to catcher Joe Astroth, "Tell this gentleman who I am!"

"You, Mr. Inspector, are face-to-face with the greatest home-run hitter since Babe Ruth," the *Buffalo News* quoted Astroth as saying. "In fact, he has hit many home runs much farther than Ruth in many parks. There is no one alive who can hit a ball for distance with Luke Easter." The puzzled inspector looked at Easter, then in his early 40s, and asked for an autograph for his son, but added, "What are you doing in Buffalo?"

As a child, I wondered about that question. And after Easter retired from an active playing career in 1964, I lost track of him. Fifteen years later, I read that he had been murdered, the victim of an armed robbery in Euclid, Ohio.

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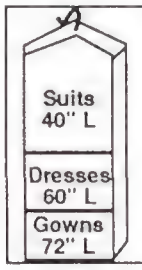

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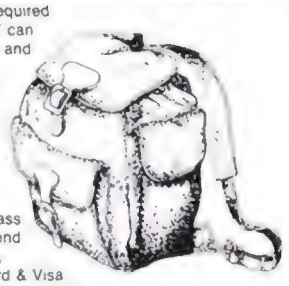

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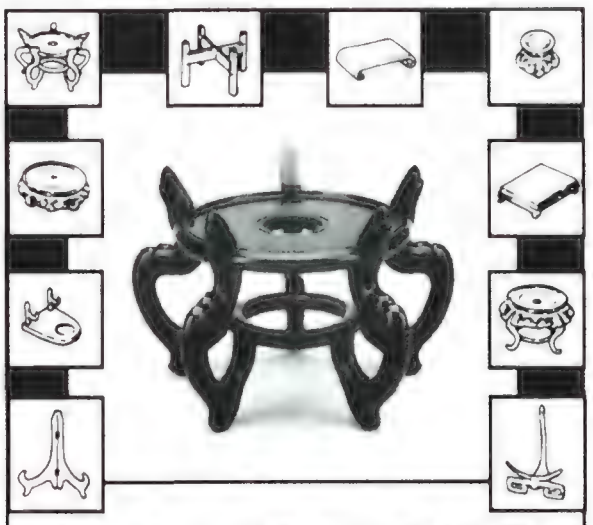

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New York, nearly ten years after Easter's death, I found the Easter file full of baseball clippings. The major gaps were in the beginning.

Throughout his baseball career, Luke Easter maintained that he was born in St. Louis in 1921. But after a visit to the home of Luke's older sister, Minnie Easter Blanks, it was revealed to me in the pages of the big, pictorial family Bible that Luscious Easter was born August 4, 1915, at 8:15 P.M. in Jonestown, Mississippi. Jonestown, a Delta town of about 400 people, was then located between two huge cotton plantations. By the time Luke Easter was born, levees had stopped the cyclical flooding, and some blacks in Jonestown—including Easter's family—owned their own land.

The Easter family had its share of trials. Luke's mother, Maude, died of tuberculosis in 1922, leaving a void in the lives of her seven children (two of whom died young). Two years after his wife's death, James Easter, who attended Tuskegee Institute, sold his farms and followed a brother to St. Louis, where he found a job shoveling sand in a glass factory.

Luke Easter grew up in a city, and a time, that offered few job opportunities for blacks—even educated blacks. With only two "colored" high schools open to him, Easter quit school in the ninth grade.

Yet St. Louis was also a good sports town—and baseball crazy. While Dizzy Dean and Pepper Martin of the Cardinals dazzled the largely white crowds, the black fans had their own heroes: Oscar Charleston and James (Cool Papa) Bell of the Negro Leagues, and Eldridge (Chillie) Mayweather and George Mitchell of the semipros.

A 1954 Topps baseball card said that Luke Easter had been primarily a softball player before breaking into professional baseball. But that myth crumbles under scrutiny. J. C. Easter, Luke's younger brother, remembers that as kids he and Luke would "play ball just about all day long." Luke developed his batting eye by using a broomstick handle to hit hard-thrown, flat soda-bottle tops that would twist,

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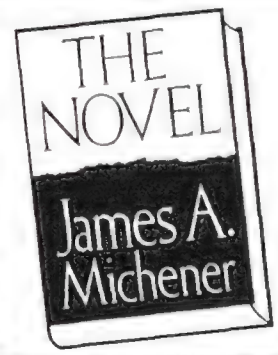

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turn, float and drop at will. By the late '30s, Easter's name started appearing in the box scores of the *St. Louis Argus* (a black newspaper). He played the outfield and first base for the semi-pro St. Louis Titanium Giants, sponsored by the National Lead Company.

Barnstorming with some of the best teams around, the Giants generally lost only a half-dozen games a year out of 60 against teams from other towns and cities. The Giants defeated all six Negro American League teams they came up against in 1940.

Jesse Askew, who played shortstop and consistently hit over .400, is one of the few living members of the Titanium Giants. Askew says Easter was unlucky in not getting an earlier shot at the Negro Leagues, primarily because he played poorly in exhibitions against teams like the Kansas City Monarchs. "It's just one of those things. He was a player you had to see every day to appreciate."

Power hitters and chums, Al Rosen and Easter clown around in the locker room.

Then World War II broke out. Easter spent 13 months in the Army before getting a medical discharge because of a bad ankle, which he had fractured during a car accident in 1941. He finished out the war working in a Portland, Oregon, shipyard.

Easter got his first break in 1946 when he joined the barnstorming Cincinnati Crescents, owned by Harlem Globetrotter show-biz genius Abe Saperstein. Given the chance to play baseball full-time, Easter showed his gratitude by blasting home runs in games from Ohio to Hawaii. He quickly caught the attention of the Homestead Grays, the Negro Leagues' premier team.

Ever since the first Negro League was founded in 1920, black baseball had struggled financially, though it was never more prosperous than during World War II. But when the Brooklyn Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson after the war, that signaled the end of all-black baseball. The Homestead Grays, who had won nine consecutive pennants by 1945, played their home games in Washington, D.C. and Pittsburgh; they also had two great sluggers, Josh Gibson and Buck Leonard, the Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig of the black leagues.

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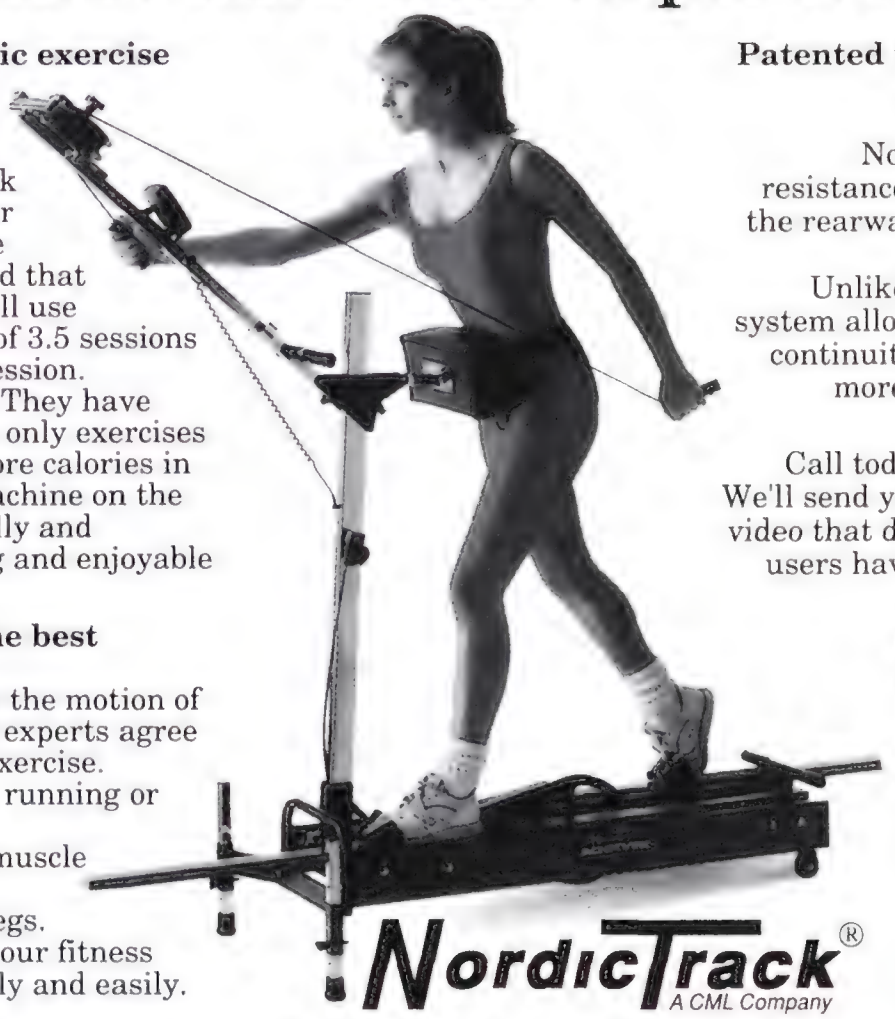

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After Gibson died of a stroke in January 1947 at age 35, the Grays began shopping for a power hitter and a gate attraction. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, a black newspaper, reported that spring the arrival of a "young natural" for whom "no fence appears to be too long for him to loop one over." Baseball had finally caught up with Luke Easter.

Easter struggled at first, but in 58 games in 1948—statistics were kept only for league games—he batted .363, with 13 home runs and 62 RBIs. He also attracted the attention of major-league scouts.

Bill Veeck of the Cleveland Indians was never blinded by the issue of race—or age. In 1947 he signed Larry Doby as the American League's first black player; next he added the ageless Satchel Paige to the team that went on to win the 1948 World Series.

When Veeck the next year bought Easter from the Grays for a reported $5,000, Luke claimed to be 27 years old, but he was actually six years older. "I'll be 22 if they want me to be, as long as I get the chance," Easter told his family.

Early in '53 season, Easter, here with wife Virgil, was sidelined by broken foot.

In spring training, Easter reported to the Triple-A San Diego Padres for some "seasoning." Padres president Bill Starr warned Easter about the prejudice he might encounter as the second black player in the Pacific League, but Luke wasn't worried. "Mr. Starr," said Easter, "everybody likes me when I hit that ball."

Crowds doubled and tripled wherever Easter played; one of the spectators was a black teenager from Oakland. Frank Robinson, former manager of the Baltimore Orioles and a Hall of Fame slugger, remembers Easter well. "He was awesome. I was a player from the sandlots myself," he says. "I was amazed by his strength and power."

Easter injured his right knee in a spring training collision and broke his kneecap several weeks later when he was hit by a fastball, but he still played on. At old Wrigley Field in Los Angeles, where fans fought to get in to watch him, he still hit six home runs in a three-game series. In late June, the Indians took him to Cleveland for surgery.

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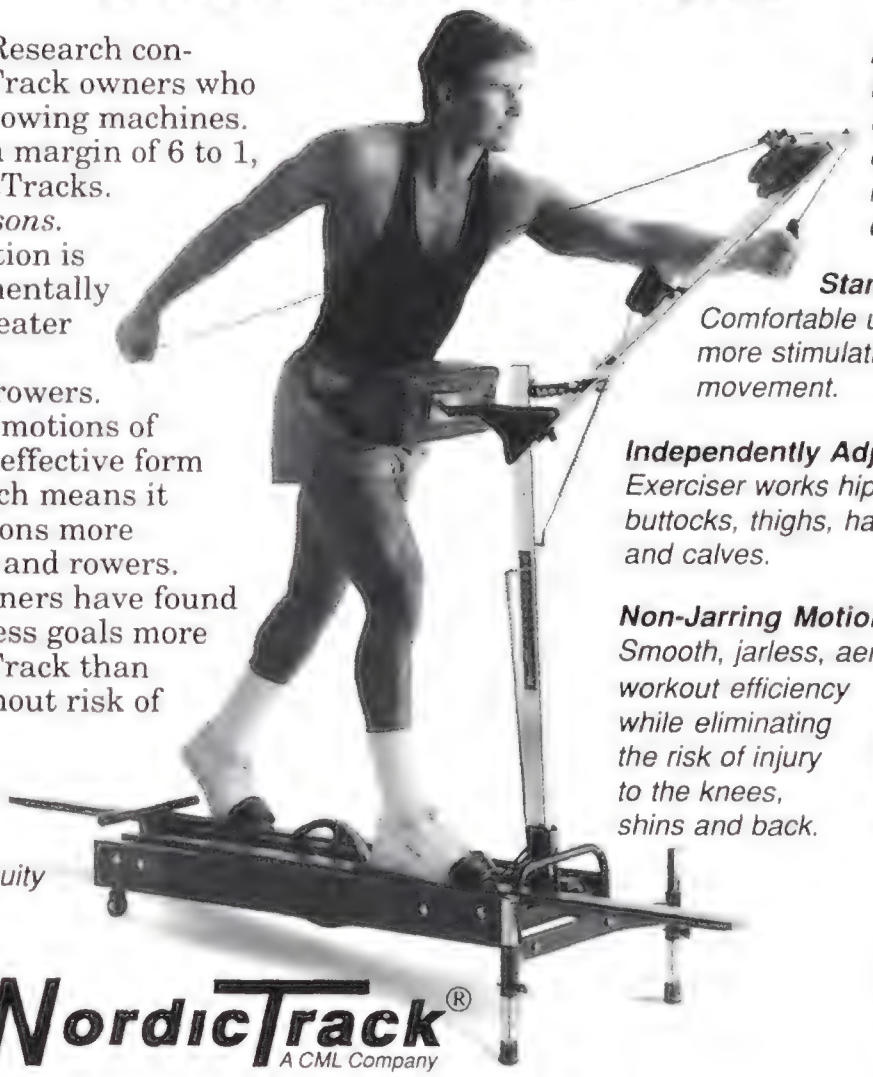

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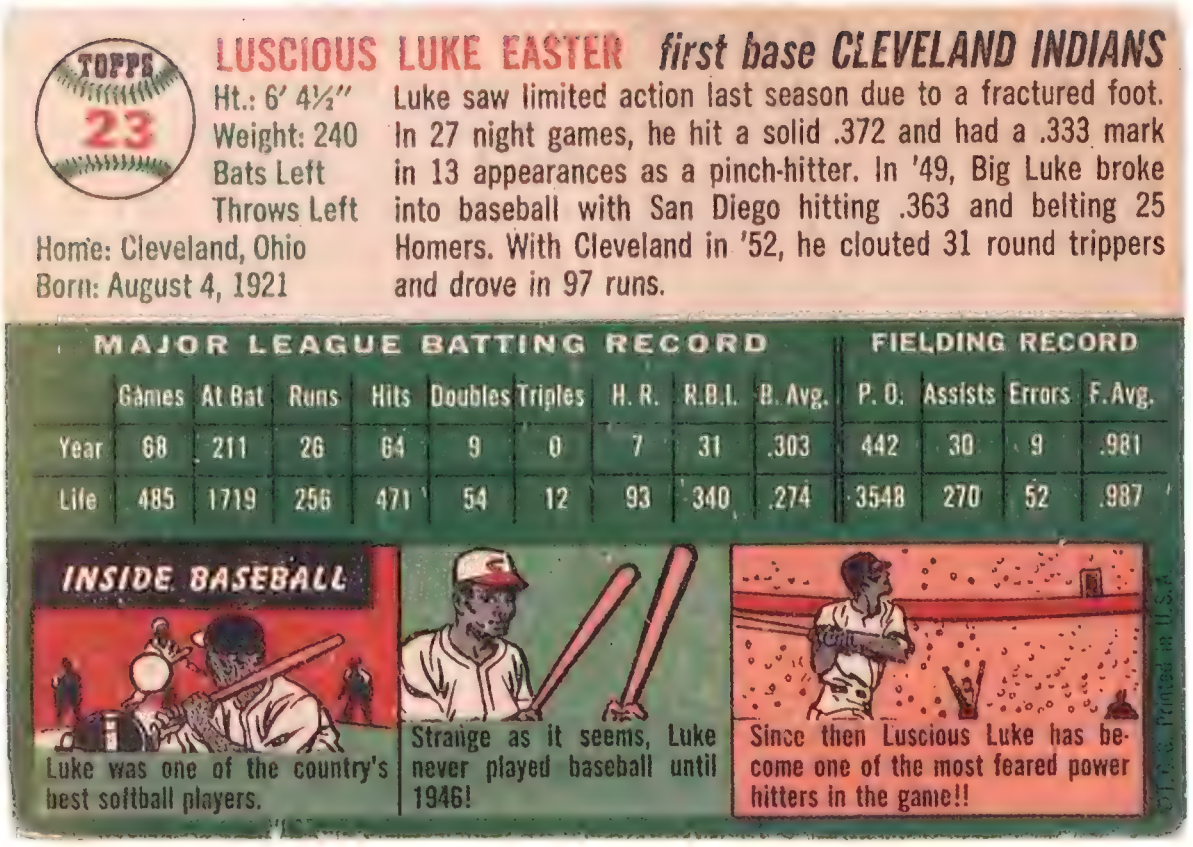
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LUSCIOUS LUKE EASTER first base CLEVELAND INDIANS
Ht.: 6' 4½"
Weight: 240
Bats Left
Throws Left
Home: Cleveland, Ohio
Born: August 4, 1921
Luke saw limited action last season due to a fractured foot. In 27 night games, he hit a solid .372 and had a .333 mark in 13 appearances as a pinch-hitter. In '49, Big Luke broke into baseball with San Diego hitting .363 and belting 25 Homers. With Cleveland in '52, he clouted 31 round trippers and drove in 97 runs.
MAJOR LEAGUE BATTING RECORD
FIELDING RECORD
Games At Bat Runs Hits Doubles Triples H. R. R.B.I. B. Avg. P. O. Assists Errors F. Avg.
Year 68 211 26 64 9 0 7 31 .303 442 30 9 .981
Life 485 1719 256 471 54 12 93 340 .274 3548 270 52 .987
INSIDE BASEBALL
Luke was one of the country's best softball players.
Strange as it seems, Luke never played baseball until 1946!
Since then Luscious Luke has become one of the most feared power hitters in the game!!

Although this 1954 baseball card lists 1921 birthdate in error—Easter actually was born in 1915—the superslugger stats are for real.

More than 20 years later, Rick Smith of the *San Diego Tribune* wrote that Easter "inspired a legend at the foot of Broadway and Pacific Coast Highway. There, amid the breeze from the waterfront, in front of the rickety old grandstand that seated most of the Lane Field's patrons, Easter rattled outfield walls, dented passing autos and smashed windows in a distant freight shed."

Around his teammates, Easter was talkative and a "big joker" whose very presence kept a team loose. He loaned money readily—"a squeeze guy," says his former St. Louis roommate, Sam Jethroe. Easter's strong jaw framed a smile that could light up a Christmas tree. He had two gold front teeth and wore a ring that looked like the headlight of the Santa Fe Chief.

A meticulous dresser who always kept his shoes spotless (his tips to shoeshine artists were always generous), Easter wore 52-longs that had to be specially tailored. His shoulders were so broad that in a suit or a sport jacket he looked as if he had forgotten to remove the coat hanger.

Easter said his only hobby was "playing cards," but he could hide an ace of spades as well as his age. Hal Lebovitz, a Cleveland sportswriter who covered the Indians in the early '50s, remembers when two cardsharps took pitcher Early Wynn and other teammates for several hundred dollars. Wynn saw them dealing from the bottom of the deck and was about to grab one of the cheaters—but he was stopped in his tracks by Easter.

Luke told the gambler, "You and I are gonna play some gin." In no time, Easter had the players' money back. His teammates were amazed. "I'd never do it to friends," Easter admitted, "but I can deal from the middle of the deck."

Based on Easter's press clippings, many Cleveland Indians fans—accustomed to stars like Bob Feller, Bob Lemon, Lou Boudreau and Larry Doby—expected the second coming of Babe Ruth. But Easter was more like Roy Hobbs than like Ruth. In Bernard Malamud's 1952 novel *The Natural*, the manager of the New York Knights was astonished to learn of Hobbs' age, saying: "thirty-four years for a rookie is starting with one foot in the grave." But Easter started with both feet in the grave: he was 34 years old and black.

When Easter joined the Indians in mid-August 1949, there were only seven other blacks in the majors: Doby and Paige; the Dodgers' Robinson, Campanella and Don Newcombe; and the New York Giants' Hank Thompson and Monte Irvin. The Indians rushed Easter into a uniform six weeks after the knee surgery, and he performed poorly in limited duty.

Indians coach and Hall of Famer Tris Speaker told the *Cleveland News*: "The poor guy came up under the worst possible conditions. From the day he entered the stadium he was booed. . . . Worst of all, this poor guy had absolutely nothing to do with the condition that made him the target of the boo birds." The "condition," some observers said, was his race.

After a slow start in the 1950 season—Easter would turn 35 in August—on May 6 Easter slammed his first major-league home run, a vicious drive off Allie Reynolds, which hit in the lower pavilion in Yankee Stadium's right field. Easter soon began to find his hitting stroke on the road, far from the booing crowds in Cleveland.

If adult fans were divided about Easter, children seldom were. Today ballplayers go to baseball-card shows and sign autographs for $15 or $20 apiece—and hardly look at the kids, let alone talk to them. No money could ever keep Easter from talking. He regularly dropped by sandlot games unannounced, dispensing baseball tips and encouragement. Through all the ups and downs, kids never quit on Luke. Once asked when he planned to retire, Easter said, "When [kids] quit on me, I'll quit, too."

Meantime, Easter's clutch hitting turned many of the "boos" into shouts of "L-u-u-u-k-e!" In a September rain-delayed game that carried past midnight, the Indians trailed the Yankees 7 to 5, with two out in the bottom of the ninth. Easter faced Tom Ferrick, a right-handed sinker-ball pitcher,

with runners on second and third. Casey Stengel went to the mound to tell Ferrick to keep the ball high.

After the game, the Yankees manager was still trying to explain his move to reporters. As he walked back to the dugout, Stengel remembered: "The only reason I got this old pitcher, Ferrick, is that he has a good low ball that stops most batters. I don't even know if he can throw a high one. A moment later, I hear a tremendous roar."

Easter's home run won the game, and beat the 1 A.M. league curfew. "I looked at the clock on the big scoreboard when I went to the plate," Luke said. "It was exactly 5 minutes of 1 when I teed off on that baby."

As usual, the Indians finished behind the Yankees, but it wasn't Easter's fault. In 141 games, he batted .280, with 28 home runs and 107 RBIs. It was an excellent year for a rookie or a veteran. Only one other in his age group (35 or older) had a better year—batting .301, with 32 home runs and 122 RBIs. And he was Joe DiMaggio.

Throughout his career and after, Easter introduced youngsters to sports.

At the start of the 1951 season, Easter collapsed while making a routine putout, suffering a torn cartilage in his left knee. Teammates marveled at his ability to play in spite of injuries. Easter wore a knee brace and wrapped his legs up like a mummy. When the bad knee was drained, Luke called it "gettin' my oil changed." Easter missed almost 30 games, but still led the team with 27 home runs and 103 RBIs.

By the 1952 season, Easter's legs ached; his vision had deteriorated; he had developed headaches from a sinus condition. After he fell into a horrible slump, fans sent a torrent of letters to Indians managers, urging them to give Easter a permanent vacation.

In the face of criticism, Easter showed that his yoke was heavy but his burden surprisingly light. He said, in a first-person article in the *Cleveland News*: "I hear the boos. You can't turn them off. But I'm not losing any sleep over them. . . . I'd rather have them boo me than the other players on our club. I've got broad shoulders."

After Easter botched several ground balls against the White Sox, the Indians demoted him to their Triple-A team in Indianapolis. Triple-A pitching revived Easter's confidence, and in two weeks he was back with Cleveland. There he got a chance to show what a younger, healthier Luke Easter might have been like.

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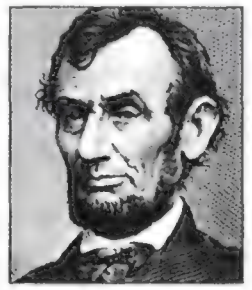

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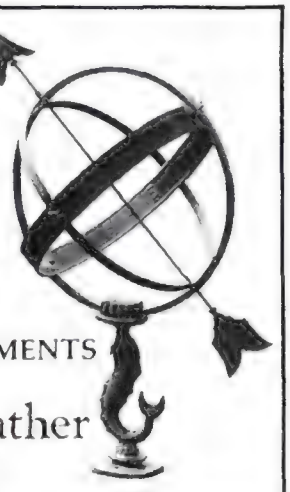

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He went on a half-season rampage that nearly brought the Indians a pennant. After a miserable start, he finished the season with 31 home runs, 97 RBIs and a .263 batting average—and the *Sporting News* named Easter the American League's outstanding player.

General manager Hank Greenberg, the former Detroit Tigers home-run king, was elated. Most baseball experts had told him that Easter was through. "His comeback is the most amazing thing I've ever seen," Greenberg told a reporter. "Six weeks ago . . . the snap in his swing was gone completely. They thought he'd never come back."

By 1953, Easter looked professionally and personally secure. He had a $20,000 contract, his highest salary ever. Married twice before, he had a new wife, Virgil, a good manager of money who made sure that his earnings did not disappear in loans to friends or card games, especially since there was now a family to support.

In the fourth game of the 1953 season, Easter was hit by a pitch that broke the first metatarsal bone in his left foot. He missed most of the season. The 1954 Indians won the pennant, but they did it without Easter, optioning him to Ottawa of the International League.

Luke took the demotion in stride. When he was released, Virgil says, he would tell her, " 'Na, Babe, I'm not worried, somebody needs a good hitter.' He'd get a deck of cards and play 'sol' [solitaire], and wait for the phone to ring." But no major-league team ever called again.

After stops in Ottawa, San Diego (again) and Charleston, West Virginia—where, as a visiting player, he was fined for having opened the gates to a St. Paul, Minnesota, ballpark to let in kids who didn't have money—Easter was sold to the Buffalo Bisons in 1956. He managed to redeem both himself and a faltering franchise.

When the Bisons released him in May 1959, the rival Rochester Red Wings called Easter one more time. He remained there, playing part-time, but starring as the team's idol, until 1964, when Easter retired from baseball at last at the age of 48.

By 1967, Easter was back in Cleveland, working on the night shift as a polisher at a TRW division that manufactured aircraft parts. Easter soon became the chief steward with the Aircraft Workers Alliance, in charge of more than 500 workers. He was a good bargainer, fair with management and concerned about his workers.

Luke's 477-footer landed near where Virgil Easter sits in Cleveland stadium.

"Even after he stopped playing," says Virgil Easter, "he would dream about baseball, and he'd be shaking, shaking, shaking. I'd say, 'Luke, what's wrong?' He'd say, 'Nothin', I was just runnin'.' I could always tell when it was spring training because that's where Luke's dreams were."

Virgil Easter, a slight, gray-haired woman with fine features and a trace of sadness in her eyes, still lives in the large two-story house she and Luke bought in the early 1950s. Unlike Luke, Virgil is a worrier. And she would have been frantic had she known her husband was carrying large sums of money around: he often cashed paychecks for TRW employees who could not get to the bank. Sometimes he would have a police escort; other times he would carry a small handgun. This last gamble killed Easter.

Gerald Easter still keeps his father's Lincoln Continental in mint condition.

On March 29, 1979, armed with the handgun, Easter went to a Cleveland Trust Company branch in Euclid just before 9 A.M. He emerged from the bank with about $45,000 in a shopping bag. Two gunmen approached, then let loose with a .357 Magnum at close range. After a wild car chase by police, the two (one a former TRW employee) were arrested. Their pockets were stuffed with bank envelopes containing the workers' pay. Luke died before reaching the hospital.

For the first time, most of the baseball world knew Luke's true age, 63. At the funeral home 4,000 fans filed past his casket for a last look at their hero. In the casket there was a fresh deck of his favorite "Bee" playing cards, placed by his son Gerald.

More than a thousand people attended the funeral at Mount Sinai Baptist Church; Cleveland police led a procession of 150 cars; and the Rev. Luther Hill called Easter "the man who could never die."

Virgil Easter keeps a drawer full of bottle caps for grandson Ryan, who would not mind being a hitter like his grandfather. Gerald Easter, who lives on the same street as his mother, keeps his father's late '70s, white, four-door Lincoln Continental in his garage.

The car, which has 46,000 miles on the odometer, is kept shined and is taken out for an occasional spin. Gerald describes it as "the last of the big ones."

A few miles west of the Easter home in Cleveland is Luke Easter Park, which has its share of crime and drugs. In a grassy area in the middle of a semicircular drive, there is a seven-foot-high bust of Easter on a pink-granite pedestal. He's wearing an Indians uniform. There's some graffiti on the pedestal, but the plaque reads, "Strong, courageous and beloved as a baseball player and as a man."

Several miles east of the Easter home is the well-kept cemetery where Luke Easter is buried. Virgil showed me the plot on a clear autumn day while her daughter Nana and her grandson Ryan went to the Indians' last game of the '89 season. Virgil visits the grave twice a year—near opening day and after the World Series. She frets because a crab apple tree that once shaded Luke's grave is gone. "But he liked the sun," she said. "He wouldn't have minded."

Saying goodbye to Luke Easter, officially, helped me put aside some boyhood feelings about baseball, and appreciate Big Luke more as a human being than as a legend. No one, great or small, ever forgot Luke Easter. Consistently, my phone calls were returned, and even baseball gods answered my letters when the subject was Easter:

"I read your letter about doing an article on Luke Easter, and because I thought so much of him as a person and a player, I am writing this note to give you my impressions. He was a big, powerful guy and could hit a ball a mile. The combination of Doby and Easter in the Indians lineup made it a hard-hitting ball club.

"I'll never forget the kindness that Luke Easter and Larry Doby showed me, after I had broken my elbow [in 1950] and nobody was sure I would be able to play again. In the hospital, the nurse told me there were two men downstairs who said they were ballplayers and would like to come to see me. Immediately, the door opened and it was Doby and Easter. Tears came into my eyes as I was so happy that they had taken the time to come to see Ted Williams."

In Cleveland's Luke Easter Park, a bronze bust commemorates a legendary athlete "beloved as a baseball player and a man."

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Book reviews

Hawks and Roses
Jim Ure
Peregrine Smith Books, $19.95

When I first walked into Jim and Stellanie Ure's house outside Salt Lake City I realized it wasn't so much a house as a habitat. Tucked amid woods and creeks at the base of the Wasatch Mountains, the Ure digs was home not just to four Ures but to a daunting, ever-changing cast of birds of prey in various states of disrepair. The Ures' glass-walled home was an oversize birdhouse where kestrels, falcons, owls, hawks and even eagles cohabited with the wingless occupants while Stellanie, a largely self-taught and fearless raptor rehabilitator, doctored and patched them.

It had started almost inadvertently when the Ures learned that raptors wounded by guns, cars and power lines were routinely euthanized. With the approval of the wildlife agencies, the Ures decided to open a raptor repair station. When I visited them on a magazine assignment in 1976 they had 50 to 60 birds in residence, inside or in a mews outside, all of them bearing a signature hot-eyed, uncompromising expression.

The Ures were reminded regularly that birds of prey tolerate humans only on their own terms. The family and their boarders coexisted with mutual respect, but the birds were not pets. A red-tailed hawk named Rodriguez Carter once fastened a potent talon (an eagle's talon exerts 500 pounds of pressure per square inch) onto Stellanie's face, slashing her lip and narrowly missing her eye. A kestrel named Muscles made a surprise attack one morning on Jim as he exited the shower, apparently mistaking a particularly vulnerable part of Jim for the chicken neck it was served daily.

I had a chance to see the payoff that made the Ures' work so satisfying. One morning Stellanie and I went out to release a marsh hawk ready to return to the wild. Just over half of the roughly 3,000 birds the Ures treated were eventually released. I can still see Stellanie's simultaneously rapturous and fretful expression as she watched the recovered hawk slowly spiral upward—"ring up," as falconers say—until it became a barely visible fleck against the clouds.

Jim Ure, an advertising man in his workaday life, has an easy way with an anecdote as he recounts his family's uniquely raptocentric lifestyle in this good-natured book. The always dicey demands of providing food for his charges, for example, obliged him regularly to execute mice and other rodents. Seeking a humane way to do the dirty job, at the suggestion of a conservation officer Jim dropped a firecracker into a trash can full of live mice. "The lid sailed skyward thirty feet, followed by a tumbling column of pink and white mice that rose even higher, some of them sailing in slow motion into the leaves of the narrow-leafed willow far above." Afterward, they found a solitary mouse corpse in the can and "had to cover our heads to protect ourselves from the rain of live, but probably deaf, rodents."

Birds—their stylish beauty, the sense of unencumbered freedom they project—have long inspired good writers and good writing, and Jim Ure manages a few literary flights of fancy. "I have heard the laughter of departing hawks" is a line I'd be proud to have written. He describes a flock of Canada geese with their young "steaming behind the adults like flotillas of fuzzy bathtub warships." A raven who enjoyed riding in the car "rode with her head out of the sunroof, wings spread for balance, beak open, and tongue lolling, like a happy car dog." I'm sorry I missed that.

Red-tailed hawk bears hot-eyed expression raptors are famous for.

The Ures (though, sadly, they're no longer a team) are still in the bird biz, working to protect raptors in various ways. Jim realized that the real beneficiaries of their raptor rehab program were his family, who had liberated and fulfilled themselves by acting on their best instincts. Birds of prey, he writes, "are most important for our mental health, works of art filling us with awe, beauty, and wonder." He knows that if and when we starve or poison or bomb ourselves into extinction the raptors—along with coyotes—will still be around. "A kestrel will sit on a tattered, impotent power pole . . . bobbing his tail, and calling *chee chee chee*," he writes. "Strangely I find that comforting." Not so strangely, his book is comforting too.

Freelance writer Donald Dale Jackson watches backyard birds in Connecticut.

Following the Bloom: Across America with the Migratory Beekeepers
Douglas Whynott
Stackpole Books, $19.95

In the keeping of bees there is something pastoral, something that recalls the bucolic poems of Virgil or Spenser. Bees forage across fields at the peak of blossoming, they return to the fold at night, and they have, as an improvement on sheep, the qualities of vigilance and brains. At least that is how I have always thought of it. My father kept bees, 25 years ago, near the asparagus patch in our garden, and I came to regard the drowsy sound of the hive as the sound of summer. That was, I have since learned, a golden age of beekeeping, and not merely because I was young at the time.

To me a beehive was the very emblem of immobility. It was tall, heavy with honey, the colony's beacon, well protected, and one moved it at the peril of the field bees' lives. It would never have occurred to me then that there was an industry that propagated not honey but bees themselves and their pollinating services. I would never have dreamed that men and women trucked tens of thousands of hives hundreds of thousands of miles from crop to crop year

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after year. But such an industry does exist, and it is the subject of Douglas Whynott's fine new book.

"Migratory beekeeper" suggests the image of a person on foot following a swarm across open countryside, waiting for it to settle on a bough or in the eaves of a house. Not so. The men and women in *Following the Bloom* are long-haul truckers as well as apiarists. They are as handy with a forklift as with a hive tool. Their profits are measured not in pounds of honey but in hive rentals, paid by growers of oranges, alfalfa and other crops that depend on pollination by honeybees. As spring rises from the South, the migratory beekeepers follow not far behind with hive-laden tractor trailers, seeking the momentary blossom, trying sometimes to turn a profit, sometimes just to feed their bees, but always to stay out of sight. From ignorance, the public prefers an invisible bee.

In *Following the Bloom* one person after another attests to the romance of beekeeping. Some of that romance is economic, but most of it derives from the nature of the bee itself and the society of bees. Here is Whynott's superb description of the queen: "She had that opulence, that ovulance, that mystery that suggested not only a link with human life but, with her long leather-colored body, other links as well, perhaps with the aboriginal wasp the honey bee had emanated from." The bee apart, many of the characters in this book were drawn to this life by what Whynott calls the "idyllic dream of beekeeping—a comfortable, ordered life, migrating with the bloom."

But that ordered life belonged to the days before the tracheal mite and the Africanized (formerly "killer") bee. The mites sap the bees' health and productivity; the Africanized bee threatens to change the disposition of domestic hives altogether. Both represent an extraordinary threat to an industry that pollinates crops valued at up to $20 billion a year. According to Whynott, the number of hives in this country is down a quarter already. For the commercial beekeepers a difficult life has become still more difficult, as quarantines and hive inspections increase. For the "hobbyist," the person who keeps only a hive or two, as my father did, the idyllic dream has begun to lose its pastoral charm.

New England-based Verlyn Klinkenborg is the author of The Last Fine Time.

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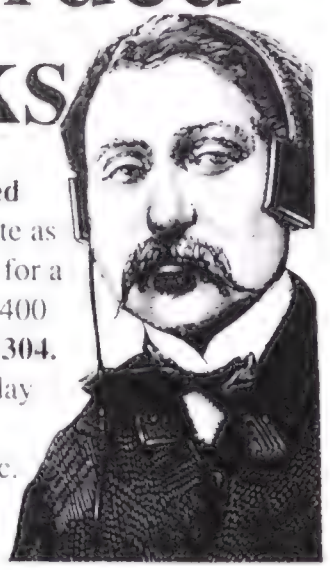

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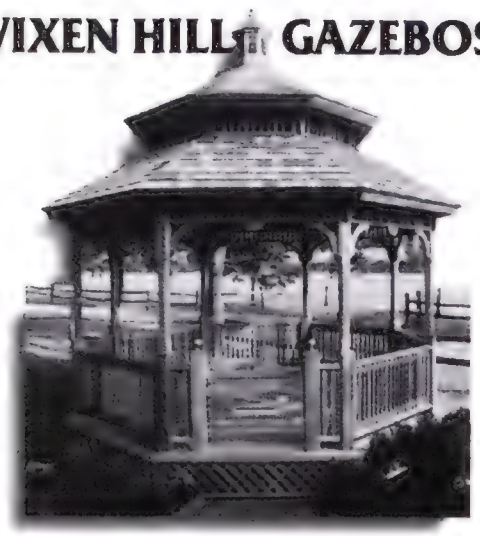

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Additional reading

Calcutta (p. 32)

Calcutta, The Living City, Vols. I and II, edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri, Oxford University Press, 1990

Calcutta: The Home and the Street, photographs by Raghubir Singh, introduction by R. P. Gupta, Thames and Hudson (New York), 1988

India: A Million Mutinies Now by V. S. Naipaul, Heinemann (London), 1990

Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye by Andrew Robinson, University of California Press, 1990

My Reminiscences by Rabindranath Tagore, Macmillan, 1991

Cormorants (p. 44)

Great Lakes, Great Legacy? by Theodora Colborn et al., Conservation Foundation (Baltimore), 1990

Freshwater Seas: Saving the Great Lakes by Phil Weller, Between The Lines (Toronto), 1990

"Decline, Resurgence and Population Dynamics of Michigan and Great Lakes Double-Crested Cormorants" by James P. Ludwig, *Jack-Pine Warbler*, Michigan Audubon Society, Vol. 62, 1990

Bank of Siena (p. 58)

Money and Banking in Medieval and Renaissance Venice: Vol. I, *Coins and Moneys of Account* by Frederic C. Lane and Reinhold C. Mueller, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985

The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, 1397-1494 by Raymond de Roover, Harvard University Press, 1963

Painting in Renaissance Siena: 1420-1500 by Keith Christiansen, Laurence B. Kanter, Carl Brandon Strehlke, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988

Barbed wire (p. 72)

The Wire That Fenced the West by Henry D. and Frances T. McCallum, University of Oklahoma Press, 1965

The Barbed Wire Saga by Stephen J. Bigolin, Gurler Heritage Association (De Kalb, Illinois), 1983

The Great Plains by Walter Prescott Webb, Ginn and Company, 1959

'Degenerate Art' (p. 86)

'Degenerate Art': The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany by Stephanie Barron et al., Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Harry N. Abrams, 1991

Art in the Third Reich by Berthold Hinz, translated by Robert and Rita Kimber, Pantheon Books (New York), 1979

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Slime molds (p. 98)

"Phylum Plasmodial Slime Molds Class Myxomycota" by Lafayette Frederick, in *Handbook of Protoctista*, edited by Lynn Margulis et al., Jones and Bartlett Publishers (Boston), 1990

Illustrated Guide to Common Slime Molds by Peter Katsauros, Mad River Press (Eureka, California), 1989

How to Know the True Slime Molds by Marie Farr, William C. Brown (Dubuque, Iowa), 1981

Hot Springs (p. 104)

The American Spa: Hot Springs, Arkansas by Dee Brown, Rose Publishing Company (Little Rock), 1982

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"The Town Without a Lid" by Collie Small, *Saturday Evening Post*, July 20, 1946

Southern Politics by V. O. Key jr., Vintage Books, 1949

Luke Easter (p. 117)

The All-Time All-Stars of Black Baseball by James A. Riley, TK Publishers, 1983

Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy by Jules Tygiel, Oxford University Press, 1983

Only The Ball Was White by Robert Peterson, McGraw-Hill, 1984

Voices from the Great Black Baseball Leagues by John Holway, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975

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Smithsonian highlights

Planning a Smithsonian visit?

The new VHS video *Guide to the Smithsonian* is an excellent aid for previsit planning. For ordering information and the free Associates' Planning Packet, send a postcard to Associates' Reception Center, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560, or call (202) 357-2700. For hearing-impaired visitors, use TDD and call (202) 357-1729. Begin your visit at the Smithsonian Information Center, located in the Castle. Hours are 9 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. daily.

Extended summer hours
Starting Monday, June 17, through Labor Day, Monday, September 2, three Smithsonian museums will operate on extended hours daily from 9:30 A.M. to 7:30 P.M.: National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of American History and National Museum of Natural History. Extended hours at the National Zoological Park will be from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. for grounds, through October 15, and 9 A.M. to 6 P.M. for the animal buildings, through September 15.

Freer remains closed
The Freer Gallery of Art is closed until late 1992.

Festival of American Folklife
The Smithsonian's 25th annual celebration will be held on the Mall, June 28-July 1 and July 4-7, from 11 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. This year's festival will feature folklife in Indonesia, land in native-American cultures, family farming in the heartland, and a music program honoring rhythm and blues. Highlights include an all-night *wayang kulit* (shadow-puppet show) and evening dance parties. For information, call (202) 357-2700.

Special July exhibits and events

National Portrait Gallery
Annie Leibovitz Photographs 1970-1990 (through August 11) Portraits of figures important in American popular culture. See *Highlights continued*, p. 134.
Magical Mixtures: Marisol Portrait Sculpture (through August 11) First national exhibition devoted solely to the artist's portrait sculpture.

National Museum of American Art
Eadweard Muybridge and Contemporary American Photography (through September 8) Photographs from Muybridge's animals-in-motion series.
The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920 (through July 28) Critical look at role of imagery in persuading people to move West.

National Museum of Natural History
This Land Is Your Land: Celebrating 75 Years of Our National Park Service (July 18-September 16) Panoramic photographs showcase diversity of our National Parks.
Beyond the Java Sea: Art of Indonesia's Outer Islands (through July 14) A survey of the cultural life of Indonesia's peoples.

National Museum of American History
Shooting Back (July 16-September 30) Photographs by homeless children reveal an intimate portrait of their lives.
The Fringe Dwellers (July 16-September 30) Watercolors and sketches of the poor and the homeless by Donna Rogers.
Below the Line: Living Poor in America (July 16-August 25) Photographs by Eugene Richards.

National Air and Space Museum
Art of the Cosmic Age (through December) Exhibit features the work of contemporary Soviet, American, Canadian and European space artists.
Blue Planet (runs indefinitely) New Smithsonian Imax film.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Court Arts of Indonesia (through September 2) Some 160 artworks reflect the traditions of Indonesia's royal courts.
Crushed Lapis and Burnished Gold: The Art of Illumination (through December 8) A selection of manuscripts from the Sackler's Vever Collection.

National Museum of African Art
Africa Illustrated: Fantasy and Reality Before 1900 (through November 10) Exhibit of early history, ethnology and travel books on Africa.
African Reflections: Art from Northeastern Zaire (through January 12, 1992) Art of the peoples of northeastern Zaire.

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Awards in the Visual Arts 10 (through September 2) Show features work of ten U.S. artists who have won Awards in the Visual Arts for 1990.
Directions—Adrian Piper: What It's Like, What It Is #2 (through September 22) An environmental installation.

Arts and Industries Building Experimental Gallery
World Wall: A Vision of the Future Without Fear (July 12-September 3) Murals by Chicana artist Judith Baca.

Anacostia Museum
Kaleidoscope: African American Photography in Washington, D.C. (through September 29) Exhibition of selected views from some 30 area photographers.

Renwick Gallery
Lenore Tawney: A Retrospective (runs through July 21) Survey of the work of the pioneer fiber-artist who freed textiles from the loom.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum (New York)
The Cooper-Hewitt Collections: A Design Resource (through August 1992) Some 1,200 objects chronicle the history, collecting philosophy, of one of the most important repositories of design.

National Museum of the American Indian (New York)
A Gift From the Heart: Two Pomo Artists (through December) Baskets and ethnographic models of traditional ceremonial objects by California Pomo artists William and Mary Benson.

Exhibition catalogs

Catalogs available currently include:
Annie Leibovitz Photographs 1970-1990 (paper, $7.50)
Awards in the Visual Arts 10 (paper, $20)
Magical Mixtures: Marisol Portrait Sculpture (paper, $24.95)
To order, send check or money order to Museum Shops, 3301 75th Avenue, Landover, Maryland 20785. Include 15 percent of total purchase to cover postage and handling (minimum, $1.75).

Smithsonian on the air
Speakers Corner with Roger Mudd: New weekly radio series presents one-hour lectures by scholars and experts

from around the world to audiences at the University of Chicago, the Smithsonian Institution and the University of Oxford. Check local listings.

Smithsonian Presents Invention: Series of half-hour television programs explores spirit of innovation behind invention. Tuesdays at 9:30 P.M., EST, on the Discovery Channel. Check local listings.

Folk Masters: Series of one-hour radio programs features award-winning performers of traditional music in the Americas. Series airs on public radio stations nationwide. Check local listings.

Smithsonian National Associates

The Smithsonian will come to San Diego, July 19-24, with an exciting series of lectures, seminars and workshops on topics from space science to historic preservation. Program will also feature Lt. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis jr., USAF (ret.) discussing his new autobiography.

For further information, write or call U.S. and International Events Program, 490 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Suite 4210, Washington, D.C. 20560; (202) 287-3210.

Resident Associate Program

To become a Resident Associate, or for fee and ticket information, call (202) 357-3030. Here are some July events:

Bulgari (July 18; 7 P.M.) Traditional music and dance from Bulgaria.

Between Father and Child (July 11; 7 P.M.) Talk by Ronald Levant, founder of Boston University's Fatherhood Project.

Pin Points Theatre: 1001 Black Inventions (July 20; 7 P.M.) An eye-opening journey through history.

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES organizes and circulates exhibitions to cities throughout the United States and abroad. To sponsor a show in your community, write SITES, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560. Here are some July exhibits:

- Haverhill, Massachusetts (July 27-August 25) *Remaking America: New Uses, Old Places*, Northern Essex Community College.
- Johnson City, Tennessee (July 20-August 18) *Paintbrush Diplomacy: Children's Art from the Americas*, Hands On Museum.
- Los Angeles, California (July 13-October 27) *The Real McCoy: Afro-American Invention and Innovation*, California Afro-American Museum.

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Highlights continued

A framer of popular culture

Bette Midler luxuriating in a literal bed of roses, Roseanne Barr and husband Tom Arnold mud-wrestling in Malibu, Whoopi Goldberg mugging impishly from a bathtub of milk. Not exactly the kind of images one might expect to see at the National Portrait Gallery, but they are there, in all their boldness and humor and ingenuity, as a tribute to the 20-year career of celebrity photographer Annie Leibovitz. With the opening of this, her first, museum exhibition, Leibovitz's work has, in her own words, achieved the "highest honor it can possibly have. It's a wonderful moment."

Her photographs, too, are wonderful moments—playful and creative collaborations between artist and subject. She got her start in 1970 at age 20. The assignment was for *Rolling Stone* magazine—photographing John Lennon. Two years later she was chief photographer for *Rolling Stone*. Moving on to *Vanity Fair* in the '80s, and more recently to ad campaigns for American Express and the Gap, Leibovitz has forged a lively and highly personal style that has framed, and to some extent shaped, the look of American popular culture.

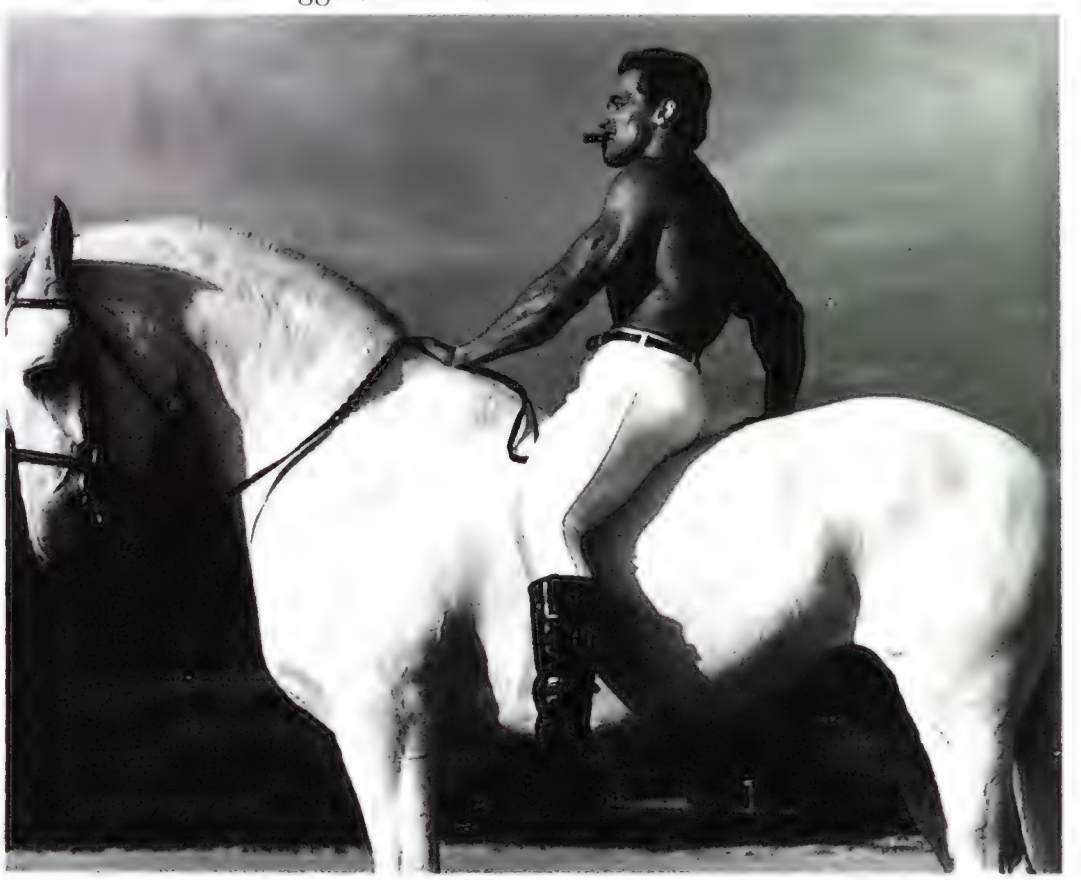
"Annie Leibovitz Photographs 1970-1990," organized by the International Center of Photography in conjunction with the National Portrait Gallery, is on view at the National Portrait Gallery through August 11. The show will travel. *Diane M. Bolz*

Mikhail Baryshnikov, Brussels, 1990

Beth Henley, Jackson, Mississippi, 1987

Muhammad Ali, Chicago, 1978

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Malibu, 1988



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Nez Perce *August 10-18* Trail ride in Idaho.

Delta Queen *August 11-19* Upper Mississippi from Minneapolis to St. Louis.

Baseball Stadiums *August 15-21* Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland.

Lewis and Clark *August 18-25* Horseback camping on the 1805 trail in Idaho.

Arches and Canyonlands (Utah) *August 31-September 7*

Washington State *August 31-September 9*

Arizona Wildlife *September 4-12* Sonoran Desert and Chiricahua Mountains.

Maine Seascapes *September 7-14*

Sojourn in Sedona (Arizona) *September 12-18*

Atlantic Quest Cruise *September 13-30* Search for polar bears and whales in Canada's Atlantic Provinces.

California's Channel Islands *September 15-20*

New York: Ellis Island *September 19-22*

In the Footsteps of Coronado (New Mexico) *September 21-27*

Columbia River Cruise *September 21-29*

Air and Space Museum: Behind the Scenes *September 22-25* For Contributing Members.

Grand Canyon Weekend *September 25-29*

Bryce, Zion and the North Rim *October 2-12*

North Carolina Historic Homes *October 6-13*

Texas Wildlife Safari *October 16-20*

Detroit Auto Barons *October 31-November 3*

Civil War: Eastern Theater *October 31-November 10* Visit Antietam, Gettysburg.

European Treasures in New York *November 21-24* Also includes *Miss Saigon.*

Christmas at the Smithsonian *December 12-15*

Christmas in Santa Fe *December 20-27*

Virgin Islands Cruise *December 20-28*

Canoe the Everglades *January 21-29*

Bermuda *February 13-17 or March 19-23*

South Texas Birds *February 15-22*

Foreign Study Tours

Beyond the North Cape *July 22-August 8* Bergen-to-Spitsbergen cruise.

NEW Summer Island Pageant Cruise *August 5-21* Madeira, Corsica, the Canaries and Balearics.

USSR-Far East *August 7-20*

Tibet *August 18-September 6*

Switzerland by Train *August 22-September 3*

NEW Viking Cruise *August 29-September 16* Copenhagen-New York, *Seabourn Spirit.*

Russia's Golden Ring *September 1-15* Moscow, Leningrad, Pskov, Suzdal.

Medieval Jewels of the Midi (France) *September 2-14*

Hungary *September 5-19*

Classic China *September 5-25*

Indonesia *September 5-26*

Yangtze River (China) *September 5-28*

NEW Battlefields of Europe *September 7-20* France, Belgium—from Napoleon to WWII.

Czechoslovakia *September 8-22*

Danube Cruise *September 9-26*

NEW Man and His Environment Cruise *September 10-23* From Bruges to Barcelona on the *Illiria.*

Southern Italy and Sicily *September 14-29*

Ireland Walks *September 15-26*

NEW Where Mozart Made Music *September 18-29* Vienna, Salzburg, Prague.

Australia-New Zealand *September 27-October 17*

Soviet Union in Transition *October 9-19* Moscow, Leningrad, Tallinn.

NEW Autumn in Wessex (England) *October 15-27*

Japan Journey *October 19-31*

Folk Art of Colonial Mexico *October 27-November 8*

Echoes of India *October 27-November 16* Calcutta to Madras.

London Interlude *October 31-November 9*

Thailand and Laos *November 6-22*

China Sojourn *November 6-23*

Mexico's Copper Canyon by Train *November 30-December 7*

Treasures of Costa Rica *December 2-17*

Christmas in Switzerland *December 21-January 1* Bern and Basel.

South America Cruise *January 8-28* On the *Seabourn Pride.*

Mesoamerican Study Programs *January-March* Yucatán, Oaxaca, Guatemala.

Smithsonian Seminars

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Hawaii's Active Volcanoes *August 4-8 or August 11-15* Hilo, Hawaii.

Oxford (England) *September 14-27* Study at historic Worcester College.

Chesapeake Ecology *September 15-19* Annapolis, Maryland.

Write to Smithsonian National Associate Program, Washington, DC 20560 or call (202) 357-4700 for tour and seminar brochures,

SMITHSONIAN-STYLE

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NEW Riviera Art (France) *September 17-27*

NEW Decorative Arts *September 19-22* At the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York.

Aircraft Restoration *September 23-26*

NEW The Atomic Age *October 1-5* Los Alamos, New Mexico.

NEW Yellowstone Ecology *October 6-12*

NEW American Quilts *October 7-10*

Rome Seminar *October 9-21*

Civil War in Fredericksburg *October 11-14*

NEW Middle East Update *October 21-24*

Southwestern Art, Literature, Archaeology *October 27-31* Santa Fe, New Mexico.

NEW Seeds of Change *November 3-7* Explore the interplay of New and Old World cuisines.

Antique Furniture *November 12-15*

NEW Civil War at Gettysburg *November 14-17*

Egypt *November 14-30*

NEW Santa Cruz Island Biology (California) *November 20-24*

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Shown enlarged. Actual diameter: 1 ½"

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By Elaine Segal

You should have seen the onethatgotaway

Just as I am about to slip into a permanent bad mood, a couple of friends show up with fishing poles. I protest that I have no interest in fishing. An hour later I am sitting on a rock, scowling at the water. I have been outfitted with a beginner's rod that has a smiling plastic whale on the handle, with fishline dribbling out of its mouth. I press the button on the whale's head and shake my pole at the water as if to scold it. The line shoots out of the whale's mouth in an elegant arc, and my red plastic worm disappears into the greenish lake some 50 feet away.

"Very good," says Matt. "Now what?" I ask. "Reel it in," says Matt. "Then what?" "Do it again." With every cast, I send my bad mood out across the water and into the drink. I imagine all the terrible things you can catch when you use your bad mood as bait. I feel lucky to return empty-handed and take up my life again with renewed spirit.

The fishing party resumes at the Salmon Hole, an unromantic roadside spot overlooked by a tire-retread plant. This time we use live bait. I watch Matt attach a worm to my hook, and think that one of the many things I will do on the day hell freezes over is bait my own hook. "Fish or cut bait," I say to myself, reflecting on how I have no idea what this familiar homily means.

Matt has described the sensation of getting a bite as a sort of electrical impulse, but I am unprepared for the surge of panic that shoots up my line and bursts into the fiber of my being. My intelligence falls into a dead faint, and I hear myself shriek, "Oh no, I've got something! What should I do?" "Lower your voice," says Matt, "and reel it in."

In the 30 seconds it takes me to land my extremely young fish, I am given to understand that this is the first time for both of us. My prey and I are unified by hysteria—we are clearly horrified by the sight of each other; the fish's gills are open so wide that it appears to be in the process of turning its head inside out. This causes me to double over and grab my own head as if to prevent it from following suit. "Why don't we just throw this one back," Matt suggests. "Yes, please," I whimper.

A few moments later my ex-fish is wiggling back to its friends and relations, a sadder and wiser young trout with a sore lip and a tale to tell. As for me, I can't wait to try again. The pesky dialogue that is my mind has piped down except for two words that flash on and off like a big red sign: BLOOD SPORT, BLOOD SPORT, it says.

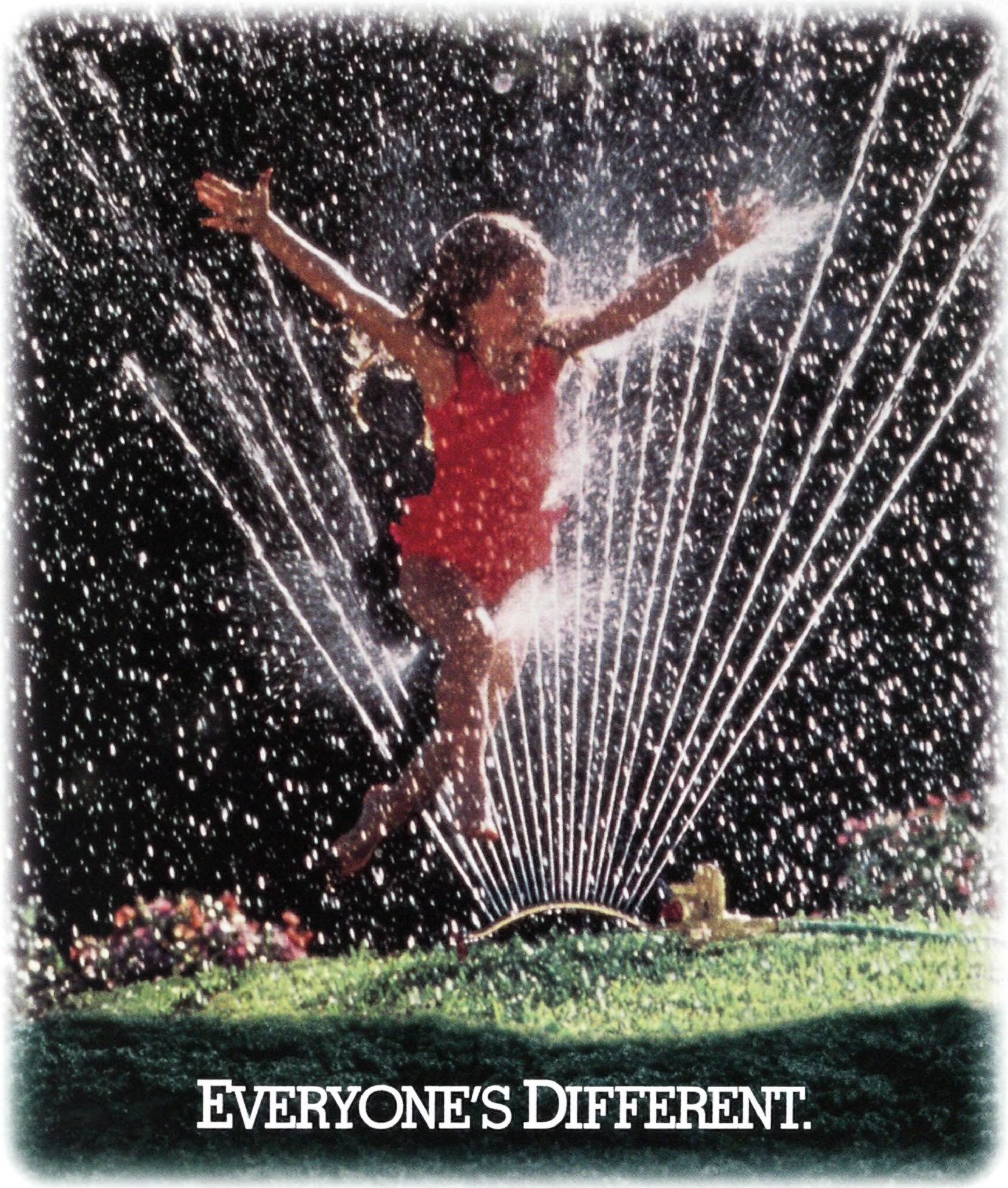
The next day I go to town with the intention of buying a book, but somehow end up in the fishing department at Woolworth's. There I spend half an hour gazing at the lures, which range from representational decoys to Day-Glo plastic abstractions of unlikely marine life. The display seems to suggest that there are two kinds of fish: serious, literate fish who make honest mistakes, and impulsive, unrealistic fish who are brought down by their bad taste. My meditation on fish psychology is interrupted by a voice asking, "What're you after?" I turn to meet the eyes of an intense-looking young man of about 17. "Trout," I answer. "And you?" "Pike," he says and removes a hairy, mouse-size lure from the rack. "Pretty sinister-looking lure," I remark. "Sinister lure for a sinister fish," he replies. "Do you fish alone?" I decide that it is best to answer, "No, I fish with a friend."

The following Sunday I convince my two best friends, an ex-angler and a non-angler, to go fishing with me. I have set two goals for myself: I will bait my own hook and I will touch a fish, tasks that pose a considerable challenge to my squeamish nature. The non-angler settles herself on a rock with the newspaper, and the ex-angler coaches me in worm handling. "Pain is a concept," he philosophizes. "Worms don't have brains." Brain or not, my worm bucks the moment it touches the hook end. "It's just a reflex," says my coach. "Right. An unconscious response to pain," I reply. "Elaine, a worm is very low on the food chain," says my coach. "I hate this!" I yell. "If you hate it, don't do it," the non-angler suggests. "I have to do it," I say, and push the worm onto the hook. "I did it!" I cry, basking in the approval one receives for having overcome one's basic humanity.

I proceed to fish, selecting a spot down the rocks from a fisherman who seems to be having luck. We nod at each other, and I cast into the tree directly overhead. "Got yourself a big one, huh?" says the fisherman. "Too bad you just missed tree season—closed yesterday," he adds sympathetically. By the time I untree my line and rebait my hook, it begins to rain.

Just as we are about to leave, the sympathetic fisherman appears from behind a rock and shyly holds out a trout like a big, wet flower. I carry the fish to the car in my bare hands. Although I have satisfied both my goals, I'm a little blue. "I wish I'd caught this," I say. My coach tries to console me. "You did catch it," he says.

As the summer wears on it is revealed to me that there really is such a thing as beginner's luck. Again and again I address the upside-down question mark of my hook to the great population of the submerged, and again and again the answer is a great, burbling *no*. Nevertheless, I remain convinced that someday my trout will come. One day it does, a fine 36-inch trout in 2½-inch-trout's clothing. Before I throw it back I hold it in my hand for a moment to pet it. A long, affection-filled minute passes and then it shoots me a look as if to say, "Had enough? Or are you going to get out the baby book and name me? How about Onethatgotaway," it suggests, and without waiting for an answer, hops out of my hand and, with no further assistance, deftly twitches across the sand and back into the water.



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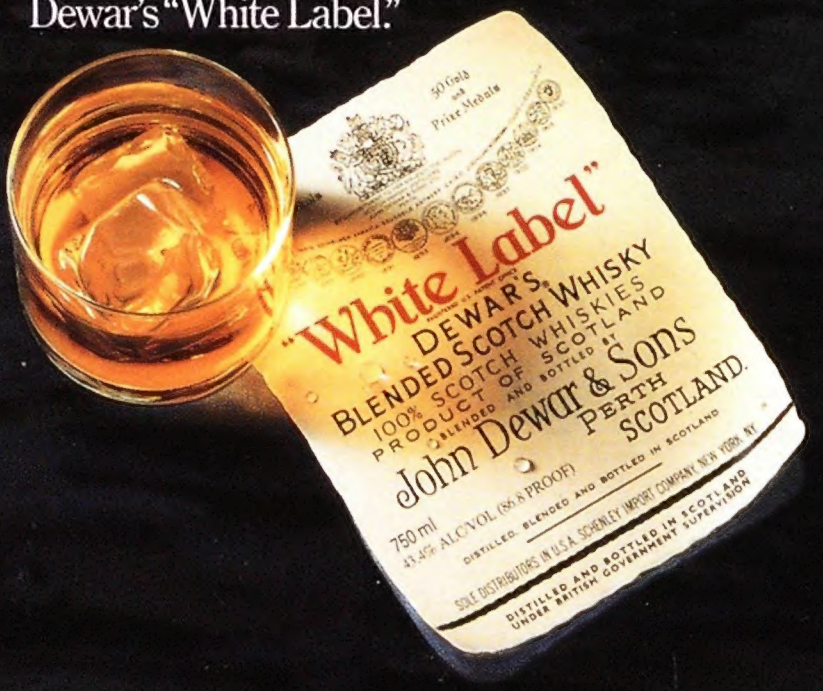

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